

# Marcus Clarke

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NOVELIST, JOURNALIST  
AND BOHEMIAN

Michael Wilding's documentary *Wild Bleak Bohemia: Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall* won the Colin Roderick Award and the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Non-Fiction. His recent publications include the memoir *Growing Wild*, the essays *Wild About Books* and the novels featuring the private investigator Plant – *The Prisoner of Mount Warning*, *The Magic of It*, *In the Valley of the Weed*, *Little Demon* and *The Travel Writer*. He is Emeritus Professor of English and Australian Literature at the University of Sydney.

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*Asian Dawn*

*In the Valley of the Weed*

*Little Demon*

*The Travel Writer*

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**NOVELIST, JOURNALIST  
AND BOHEMIAN**

M I C H A E L   W I L D I N G

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# Marcus Clarke Bohemian

Marcus Clarke was one of those writers whose life was a succession of stories in itself. He was born in the London borough of Kensington on 24 April 1846 at 6 p.m. He was an only child and his mother Amelia died of tuberculosis just before his fourth birthday. In 1863, his father, a barrister with a good London practice in chancery, suddenly fell ill, lost the power of speech, and was put into an asylum at Stoke Newington, where he died on 1 December. Marcus wrote to his school friend Cyril Hopkins: 'I remember, when my father was first taken ill, his telling me that I should be well provided for. He worked too hard and too long; which produced his final and fatal attack of paralysis ... My cousins thought that he was worth at least seventy thousand pounds ... Judge then of our consternation at finding affairs in the greatest confusion, the house in Ireland (left him by his elder brother) sold, and only a certain sum at his banker's. Records of nothing! His cheque books showing large sums of money drawn out of his banking account with no trace of where they went to.'<sup>1</sup>

Three months before his father died Marcus was packed off to Australia where his uncle James was a judge in Victoria. Earlier, his uncle Andrew had been Governor of Western Australia and his cousin Andrew the first Surveyor-General and Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands for Victoria, and Member of Parliament for Emerald Hill. Marcus was found a job in a bank. Hamilton Mackinnon, in the biographical introduction he wrote to two collections of Clarke's writings, records Clarke's farewell encounter with the manager:

Clarke: 'I have come to ask, sir, whether you received my application for a few weeks' leave of absence.'

The Manager: 'I have, Mr Clarke.'

Clarke: 'Will you grant it to me, sir?'

The Manager: 'Certainly, Mr Clarke, and a longer leave, if you desire it.'

Clarke: 'I feel very much obliged. How long may I extend it to, sir?'

The Manager: 'Indefinitely, if you do not object!'<sup>2</sup>

Clarke worked on the Swinton and Ledcourt sheep stations in the Wimmera district of Western Victoria for a couple of years from 1865 to 1867. Arthur Patchett Martin wrote of Clarke's time there: 'It is said that Mr Holt, the squatter, used to tell how he debauched the unsophisticated minds of his boundary-riders, by reading to them the too realistic pages of the great Balzac. He was in the habit of propounding theories as to the proprietorship of land resembling those of Mr Henry George, and which, it must be confessed, were not calculated to make those rude sons of toil contented with their lot.'<sup>3</sup>

Returning to Melbourne, Clarke found work as a journalist with *The Argus* newspaper and its associated weekly, *The Australasian*. He did the usual things. He wrote a review of a concert performance that, unknown to him, the singer had cancelled through illness.<sup>4</sup> He used the account of a horse race from his novel *Long Odds* as the basis for a report of the Melbourne Cup allegedly by camera obscura, suitably changing the names.<sup>5</sup> He remarked on the 'instincts of monopoly of the parsimonious management of the Theatre Royal' and warned about the production that 'they have selected to mutilate'. The Theatre Royal sued for defamation and won a farthing's damages on each of two counts,<sup>6</sup> and Clarke, who had written and adapted a number of plays, got no further work in the theatre for the next five years.

Amidst it all he plunged into *la vie Bohème*. The Café de Paris of the Melbourne Theatre Royal was one of Clarke's favourite hangouts.

‘Founded by a gentleman who had some difficulty in paying his bricklayers,’ Clarke wrote, it became the fashionable place for the Bohemians of the time. Theatre people, journalists, and others. Especially others. Clarke described his lifestyle at that time:

I was living then in Fig Tree Court with my friend Savage, and we dined at the Café daily. We were not rich, for we had both dissipated our incomes in the exact manner recorded of the Prodigal Son. I wrote for the *Peacock*, and Savage for the *Screechowl*. We made some four pounds sterling a week — and we were really thankful (not being grocers or drapers) to earn so much. The morning was spent in scribbling, the afternoon in tobacco, the evening in dinner, theatre, and gaslight. I fear we did not lead virtuous lives. I am sure that we were often out of bed after the small hours. I know that Madame Gogo and Lisette de Jambejolie assisted in the spending of the *Peacock’s* bounty. We were utterly useless beings, but then — well, we had good digestions and did not bother ourselves with high resolves and sentimental lovemaking. Now that Savage has written that work on the Pyramids, and my ‘Poems of the Affections’ have made so great a sensation, I feel that we ought to be much ashamed of the days when we were wicked, and natural, and happy.<sup>7</sup>

Charles Bright recalled meeting Clarke at the Café de Paris:

I noticed as a peculiarity of the newcomer that he partook of absinthe, a drink rarely called for by any but Frenchmen, and I asked if he liked it.

‘Not particularly,’ he said, ‘but I’m experimenting with it. They say it’ll drive a fellow mad in a month and I want to find out if that’s a fact. I’ve tried opium-smoking, and

rather like that. There are a lot of lies told about these things, you know, and we have scriptural authority for proving all things and holding fast that which is good. I can't say yet if absinth be good, or not.<sup>8</sup>

Clarke was not averse to experimenting with drugs. He wrote a piece about hashish, 'Cannabis Indica', in the *Colonial Monthly*, February 1868.<sup>9</sup> And he seems to have continued to use it. A Dr Cannabis appears in the Noah's Ark column he contributed to *The Australasian* in 1872 and 1873.<sup>10</sup>

With the right family connections, Clarke joined the establishment Melbourne Club in 1868. In the same year he joined the newly established Athenaeum Club, and helped establish the more Bohemian and literary Yorick Club.

The Yorick Club had its origins in the Saturday night gatherings arranged by Frederick Haddon, the editor of *The Argus*, at his lodgings in Spring Street. When he moved into rooms in Collins Street there was no suitable large room for the Saturday night meetings.

Haddon and Clarke were the moving spirits behind the formation of the Yorick Club in May 1868. It provided a meeting ground for fellow writers and journalists such as Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Kendall, George Gordon McCrae, J.J. Shillinglaw, Henry Gyles Turner, R.P. Whitworth, G.A. Walstab, Alfred Telo, James Neild, James Smith, Hamilton Mackinnon, Patrick Moloney, F.T. Carrington and Garnet Walch.<sup>11</sup>

Initially the group moved to Nissen's Café in Bourke Street, but the regulars there objected to the noise they made, so a room was rented for £1 a week in the *Punch* office, 74 Collins Street. The *Argus* office was next door. Mueller's tavern was below. 'In its early days Mueller catered for the club until two o'clock in the morning, after which it stayed open until four or five o'clock for members who were newspaper printers.'<sup>12</sup>

The first official meeting of the club was held 1 May 1868. Dr Patrick Moloney, a friend of Clarke's and at this time an intern at Melbourne

Hospital, gave Clarke a skull which Clarke brought to the club room and placed on the mantel-shelf with a pipe under its jaw. Clarke suggested the club should be called the 'Golgotha' because it was 'the place of skulls'. According to the 1911 history, *The Yorick Club*, he 'hammered away at the idea all night' but the club ended up being called the Yorick — an allusion not only to *Hamlet* but to Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Nonetheless when Clarke and Kendall came to write about it, they called it the Golgotha.

In the end Clarke got very huffy, took his skull and disappeared, not returning for some days. He gave the skull to the actor Walter Montgomery, who was playing Hamlet at the Theatre Royal, and used it in the famous 'Alas, poor Yorick' soliloquy.

Clarke himself wrote about the club in his 'Peripatetic Philosopher' column in *The Australasian*, 2 May 1868.

Everybody wants to know the secrets of the prison-house, and as Timmins, one of our number, incautiously told his wife that we keep a skull on the mantelshelf, there is much suspicion and terror around. I may briefly mention, however, that the story of the newspaper lad being scraped to death with oyster shells at a late supper, and buried in the back kitchen, is not absolutely true in all its details.<sup>13</sup>

It is a wonder that he could mention anything, since the first official meeting had occurred only the previous day; and the article would have had to have been written two days before that in order to meet *The Australasian's* deadline.

Henry Kendall, who moved to Melbourne from Sydney the following year, described his first visit to the club:

Facing the landing, an old door opened into an aromatic room, which, I was informed, did duty as 'the reading, talking, and smoking-den'. The most remarkable items of its furniture were the spittoons — useful utensils in their

way, no doubt, but distressingly plentiful and palpable at the Golgotha. Passing through a suggestive lavatory, we entered the library, where I found a stock-in-trade, consisting of a couple of desks, four or five chairs, a table, two shelves bristling with ancient magazines and effete blue-books, certain other sundries of a doubtful character, and a melancholy waiter. An apartment, called by courtesy the dining-room, and devoted principally to a brace of dissipated newspaper reporters, was the only other feature that arrested a somewhat disappointed stranger's attention.<sup>14</sup>

Clarke provided an account of what the Yorick Club members did *not* do. But what exactly did they do? Haddon's Saturday evenings used to offer a mixed bill of stories, songs and excellent brandy. The Yorick Club seems to have added a certain vociferousness to these occasions. The journalist and novelist, G.A. Walstab, was an early exponent of face-painting. He specialized in taking coals from the fire in the early morning, and blackening the faces of the members dozing in their chairs or beneath the tables.<sup>15</sup> The official history, *The Yorick Club: Its Origin and Development*, records that Adam Lindsay Gordon at times was wildly jovial, and one evening pitched Clarke up to very near the ceiling and caught him again coming down. There was nowhere to sit in comfort at first, anyway. At one stage they sat on bales of newspapers, at another on kerosene drums. Clarke denied that they drank the kerosene: 'I may, without breaking faith, refute the accusation made by a friend, that the members sit on tubs round the room, smoke green tea, and drink neat kerosene out of pewter pots. More I cannot reveal.'<sup>16</sup> Though they certainly had pewter pots. 'Not empty, gentle reader,' records one member.<sup>17</sup> One unsubstantiated theory is that they passed round a skull with some opium-based mixture. And the green tea Clarke refers to might have been hyonskin tea, popular in the outback and reputed to drive you mad according to some doctors; or it might have been marijuana, sometimes colloquially referred to as tea. It was about this time that Clarke persuaded a Collins Street doctor to get

him some hashish. The doctor agreed to on condition that he could watch and make notes while Clarke took it. He wouldn't let Clarke see the notes and, the doctor records, Clarke 'became sarcastic in his remarks'.<sup>18</sup> After three and a half hours Clarke began to dictate a story.

*The Yorick Club: Its Origin and Development* recalls: 'Adam Lindsay Gordon was as much a ringleader as anybody else. When he played, he played hard.' Clarke, it remarks 'was always ready for mischief night and day.' The journalist Alfred Telo, Clarke's former flatmate, is described as 'one of the most outrageous of the practical jokers'. He brought back from the Pacific islands a collection of long spears and one night these were used in a piece of Dadaist street theatre to lift from their hooks the gilded hats hung out as signs by Melbourne hatters. Another favourite game was collecting brass doorknobs. Telo particularly prized one he had stolen from the theatre critic James Neild. Neild wrote a letter to *The Argus* denouncing the 'idiots who could find nothing better to do than to wrench off citizens' knockers'—'only to find, on the following morning, that his house had been visited afresh and ornamented with a fishing rod and a gilt fish, a pawnbroker's sign, and an undertaker's board.'<sup>19</sup>

There was also a fair bit of horse riding. Frank Maldon Robb, who was a Melbourne barrister, records an anecdote by the Melbourne solicitor James Moloney, brother of Clarke's friend Dr Patrick Moloney, about an afternoon spent with Clarke, the actor Walter Montgomery and Adam Lindsay Gordon when they rode across what was then Elwood Swamp:

It remains for Mr Moloney an unforgettable day by virtue of two facts: first, the romantic rhetoric which poured unceasingly from the lips of Marcus Clarke on all subjects in heaven and earth and the waters under the earth, broken at frequent intervals by the declamations of Montgomery of relevant or irrelevant passages from Shakespeare; and secondly, by the contribution of Gordon to the wild symposium. Mounted on a little pony, his legs almost touching the ground, Gordon raced it at every obstacle that

could be construed into a jump, and then darted back to the other three, firing off long quotations from his favourite Latin authors, the jaunt thus begun not ending till the ‘wee sma’boors’ in the poet’s house at Brighton.<sup>20</sup>

But another jaunt with Montgomery in June 1868 ended in disaster when Clarke fell from his horse, fractured his skull and was unconscious for three weeks. The ‘Peripatetic Philosopher’ column did not appear for five weeks and Clarke’s friend G.A. Walstab supplied two episodes of Clarke’s novel *Long Odds* which was being serialized in the *Colonial Monthly*.

Clarke always had an interest in the theatre. A short burlesque that he wrote, *The Lady of the Lake*, was given theatrical performance in 1864 and his first full-length play, adapted from Charles Reade’s novel *Foul Play*, was performed in 1868, followed by *Peacock’s Feathers* adapted from Molière’s *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Plot*, dramatized from Alexandre Dumas’ novel *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne*.<sup>21</sup>

22 July 1869 Clarke married Marian Dunn, the youngest daughter of the Irish comedian and actor John Dunn. He had typically failed to look for lodgings for them both until the marriage ceremony had actually been concluded. She had been a popular actress before her marriage. Eleven years later she was back on the stage again to help out with the family cash crises, Clarke writing *A Daughter of Eve* and adapting a French comedy *Forbidden Fruit, or the Custom of Caudubec* with parts especially for her.<sup>22</sup>

In 1870, the year after his marriage, Clarke took a salaried job as Secretary to the Trustees of the Melbourne Public Library.<sup>23</sup> He wore his duties lightly. The moving spirit behind the establishment of the library and the chairman of its board of trustees was Sir Redmond Barry. Hamilton Mackinnon remarks on ‘the interest Sir Redmond Barry evinced in the rising *littérateur*, whom he took under his parental wing, when obtaining for him the secretaryship of the Public Library’ and records one characteristic vignette:



It was a hot summer's day, and, as was his style in such weather, the librarian was dressed dandily in unspotted white flannel, with a genuine cabbage-tree hat stuck defiantly on the back of his head; and so clothed he was leisurely wending his way up the steps of the library when he met the President, looking more starched, if possible, than ever, and wearing the well-known, flat-rimmed, tapering bell-topper, which shone in the glare of the noonday sun: and the following brief dialogue ensued.

President: 'Good morning, Mr Clarke.'

Librarian: 'Good morning, sir.'

President: 'I scarcely think your hat, however cool it may be, is exactly suited to the position you occupy in connection with this establishment, Mr Clarke — Good morning, Mr Clarke.'

And with a stiff bend of the erect body the President took his departure with just a glimmer of a smile playing round the firmly closed haughty lips.<sup>24</sup>

Clarke was fond of his cabbage-tree hat. It had been made for him by a convict in Pentridge Prison. In 1902 his third son, Rowley, took it with him when he sailed to South Africa with the 2nd Commonwealth contingent. It is preserved in the picture collection of the State Library of Victoria.<sup>25</sup>

Hugh McCrae recalled his father George Gordon McCrae's friendship with Clarke:

George, who admired him, often pointed out a green metal lion half-way up the steps leading to the Melbourne Public Library. It was into the mouth of this lion that Marcus used to commit his unfinished cigar, before being manacled to the desk at his office. The lion, smoking the cigar, became a signal to his friends that Marcus was within.

Clarke coveted his freedom so much that he would rather scintillate outside than be earning his salary as sub-librarian locked up among books. Actually, in his own words, he preferred to ‘triquer’ at the ‘House-of-the-Light-Wine-of-the-Country’ before his humdrum *devoirs* at the *Bibliothèque* ...

Marcus could never be found when he was wanted. Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von Mueller once said he might go to the Botanic Gardens and be certain of seeing there an example of the native fuchsia tied to a stake from Monday to Monday — but Clarke was no native fuchsia; and that he carried his household with him wherever he went. At the beginning of the week, he might be in Coburg; and the middle of it in Essendon; and, at the end of it, in Brighton — or Moonee Ponds.<sup>26</sup>

‘I have sold my birthright of free speech for a mess of official pottage, and so to all intents and purposes my “Peripatetic” is dead ...’ Clarke wrote in *The Australasian*, 11 June 1870, announcing the end of the ‘Peripatetic Philosopher’ column. A public service position was deemed to preclude him from journalism that involved anything that might seem like political comment. Nonetheless, he continued to write and publish no less prolifically, not only the serial of *His Natural Life*, but also the historical ‘Old Tales Retold’ that became *Old Tales of a Young Country*, together with stories, poems and articles, as well as the occasional theatrical venture. And the official pottage meant that his income was double the amount he had earned simply from writing. But it still was not enough.

*His Natural Life* may have brought Clarke fame, but it did not bring fortune. In 1874, the year it was published in book form, he was declared bankrupt. His debts amounted to £2,186. 6s. 6d; his assets to £505. A catalogue was printed for the sale of his books, *The Well-Selected Library of Mr Marcus Clarke*.<sup>27</sup> He began a new column, ‘The Wicked World’ for the Melbourne *Daily Telegraph*’s weekend magazine, the *Weekly Times*. It

shows Clarke at his most Balzacian, portraying the moneyed world of Melbourne in all its pretensions and dishonesties.

He had been hoping to be appointed the new Melbourne Librarian, but in November 1879 he wrote an essay for the *Victorian Review* on the irrelevancy of Christianity in the modern age.<sup>28</sup> The Bishop of Melbourne, Dr James Moorhouse, replied. Clarke responded with a second article exposing weaknesses in the bishop's arguments which the *Victorian Review* refused to publish. The *Melbourne Review* accepted it, only to withdraw all copies from sale upon publication. The whole debate was collected in book form as *Civilisation Without Delusion* (1880) and sold rapidly.<sup>29</sup>

It made Clarke no friends with the Melbourne establishment, and did not help his chances of being appointed Librarian. Mackinnon records the reaction of the President of the Trustees of the Public Library, Sir Redmond Barry:

The President appeared one evening in the librarian's office with a somewhat clouded countenance, and said, 'Good evening, Mr Clarke.' The librarian with an intuitive feeling that a lecture was about to be administered, returned the salutation, when the President remarked: 'Mr Clarke; you would oblige me greatly if you were to leave *some* things *undone*. For instance, that unfortunate article of yours — attacking so estimable a man as the bishop. Very indiscreet, Mr Clarke. I — think — I — should require — to — have — some — thousands a year of a private income before *I* would — venture — upon writing such an — article on — such a subject, and among so punctilious a community as exists here. Good evening, Mr Clarke.'<sup>30</sup>

Then Clarke helped adapt Gilbert A'Beckett's burlesque *The Happy Land*, based on the play *The Wicked World* by W.S. Gilbert (under the pseudonym F. Tomline). It dealt with the visit of three politicians to

Fairyland, where the benefits of popular government are explained to them. Clarke helped to adapt it from English to Australian conditions. The Victorian government immediately banned it and *The Argus* and *The Age* just as promptly printed the text.<sup>31</sup> Clarke's name was not specifically mentioned, but it was widely known that he had been involved in the adaptation. Clarke may have been surprised when he was not appointed Librarian. No one else was.

But he had little time to be surprised. He had borrowed money on the strength of being appointed. The money-lender, Aaron Waxman, pressed for payment. Clarke declared bankruptcy for a second time, and so was required to resign his library position. He became sick with pleurisy 'and this developing into congestion of the liver, and finally into erysipelas, carried him off in the space of one short week,' Mackinnon records; 'the end came upon him rapidly. Losing his speech he beckoned for pencil and paper, and seizing hold of the sheets moved his hand over them as if writing. Shortly afterwards the mind began to wander, but still the hand continued moving with increasing velocity, and every now and then a futile attempt to speak was made.'<sup>32</sup> He died at St Kilda at 4 p.m. on 2 August 1881. He was thirty-five, and left a wife and six children, the eldest only eleven.

# **Literary Friends: Gerard Manley Hopkins and Marcus Clarke**

One summer in the early 1850s three young boys met on a beach on the Isle of Wight on Britain's south coast. Gerard Manley Hopkins and his brother Cyril 'were busy making sandcastles, or engaged in paddling in the pools surrounding the rocks, and watching the yachts passing,' Cyril recalled, when Gerard

noticed a young boy of our own age who, propped against a convenient rock with a cushion at his back, sat regarding us. He had fine, grey, searching eyes and a most winning smile, and on our approaching and speaking to him cordially responded to our timid advances. He explained that he was not allowed to run about or play like other boys because of his weak shoulder, and, soon reaching the confidential stage, informed us that he had lost his mother and that his name was Marcus Andrew Hislop Clarke.

And so, Cyril wrote in his biography of Clarke years later,

there ensued a friendship that, aided by the intimacy of close companionship at school, survived the ordeal of time and distance and was maintained by correspondence until

within a year of Marcus's death.<sup>33</sup>

Although Gerard was two years older than Cyril and Marcus, the three boys were close. They all went on to attend Highgate School in London as boarders. The headmaster, Dr Dyne, was notorious for flogging his pupils. Clarke recalled in *The Australasian*, 24 July 1869: 'When I was at school I was flogged twice a week, and did not like it. The gentlemanly headmaster — he was cousin to an earl, a D.D., and strictly orthodox — was noted for his use of the birch, and used to smack his lips over a flogging with intense glee.'<sup>34</sup>

Gerard recalled one such occasion in 1862: 'Clarke my co-victim was flogged, struck off the confirmation list and fined £1; I was deprived of my room for ever, sent to bed at half past nine till further orders, and ordered to work *only* in the school room, not even in the library and might not sit on a window sill on the staircase to read.'<sup>35</sup> The particular offence is not recorded.

Gerard recorded another enigmatic episode involving Clarke:

After prayers Alexander Strachey came up to the bedroom at my request to have a last talk at the end of the quarter. I had found out from Clarke who had walked to Finchley with him the day before that on Clarke making some mention of me as 'your friend Skin' [Gerard's nickname was Skin], he said, 'He is not my friend.' 'O yes he is,' said Clarke, and afterwards asked why he went no walks with me. 'Because he never asks me' said Strachey. Not wishing to compromise Clarke, I first asked him the same question, to which he gave at once the same ungrateful answer. Being thus master of the situation, I told him I had not expected so ungrateful an answer. He knew, I said, the reason; at least he might have appreciated the sacrifice; that he had not spoken except on the most trivial subjects and on some days not even that, that he had taken no notice of me, and that

I had been wretched every time I saw or thought of it, was only what I had bargained for, I sowed what I now reaped; but after this sacrifice to be told he did not walk with me because I never asked him was too much ...<sup>36</sup>

Hamilton Mackinnon recorded in his biography of Clarke in the *Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*:

Of his school days little is known, save what can be gathered from a note-book — a kind of diary kept by him at that period ... he seems to have had only two friends, with whom he was upon terms of great intimacy. They were brothers, Cyril and Gerald [*sic*] Hopkins, and they appear, judging from jottings and sketches of theirs in his scrap album, to have been talented both as versifiers and pen and ink sketchers; in both of which their schoolfellow was equally good. Among other jottings to be found in this school record is one bearing the initials G.H., and referring to one 'Marcus Scrivener' as a 'Kaleidoscopic, Parti-coloured, Harlequinque, Thaumotropic being'.<sup>37</sup>

Scrivener was Gerard's pun on Clarke's surname, and Clarke used the pseudonym Mark Scrivener for three of his earliest writings in Australia in 1866.<sup>38</sup>

Cyril's biography provides the details of the schooldays unknown to Mackinnon. Gerard and Marcus collaborated on some early creative endeavours. Marcus's Gothic horror story 'Prometheus' 'was written when he was but 13 or 14 years old' Cyril records (24), and a frontispiece for it was 'supplied by my brother Gerard.' Gerard also supplied illustrations for Clarke's 'Lady of Lynn' and 'The Alchemist' and, Norman White notes, 'Gerard himself produced his poetic variations on the theme of arcane knowledge in "The Alchemist in the City"'<sup>39</sup> Clarke retained a lifelong interest and reading in alchemy, and it is a unifying theme in the original

serial version of *His Natural Life*. His first published story in Australia in 1866, 'The Mantuan Apothecary: A Picture in Two Panels', drew on and embellished alchemical motifs from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.<sup>40</sup>

Gerard had been taught painting and drawing by his aunt, and his family thought he might make art his career. 'I once wanted to be a painter,' he wrote to a A.W.M. Baillie in 1868.<sup>41</sup> Two younger brothers, Arthur and Everard, both became professional artists, contributors to *Punch* and other journals. Gerard's biographer Norman White suggests that it was under Marcus's influence that Gerard developed his enthusiasm for the paintings of John Everett Millais and Frederick Walker.<sup>42</sup> Cyril records that 'Marcus himself reserved from the sale of his father's effects a fine engraving of Millais' well known picture 'The Huguenot' and he cherished it until he died.' (48) White notes that as late as 1881, Hopkins was still using 'A Huguenot' (to give it the correct title) as a critical illustration in an argument with Robert Bridges.<sup>43</sup>

Marcus's literary enthusiasms were shared by the Hopkins boys. Cyril remembered 'how he, my brother and I laughed over *Valentine Vox*, and *Little Pedlington* by John Poole, and how he enjoyed and quoted *Don Quixote* ... while for the stories and verses of Edgar Allan Poe, he had the keenest admiration. I have still in my possession the copy of Poe's works given by him to my brother Gerard as a parting gift and memento.' (30–1) Gerard passed it on to Cyril upon joining the Jesuits.

Marcus' and Gerard's literary ambitions were already evident. Gerard won the school poetry prize in 1860 with a poem on 'The Escorial'; Marcus won it two years later with a poem on 'Julian the Apostate' but the headmaster disqualified him because he had neglected his other studies. Gerard wrote to Ernest Hartley Coleridge, grandson of the poet, 3 September 1862: 'I must tell you that Clarke writes very good poetry. He and I compare notes and ideas. I think I showed you his "Lady of Lynn".'<sup>44</sup> Cyril records that Clarke sent him a copy of this poem 'for which he requested my brother, Gerard, to do an illustration. This was accordingly supplied and some slight alterations in the wording of one or two lines suggested at the same time. The latter were adopted



and two more verses added. Soon after his arrival in Melbourne, Marcus posted me a copy of the poem with a view to its insertion in *Once a Week*, a periodical then at the zenith of its popularity ... We three had jointly taken it in at school, (the editor, Edward Walford was a family friend of ours).’ (46) The manuscript, two pages signed M.C., is preserved at Campion Hall, Oxford. *Once a Week* rejected it. But in 1868 Clarke slipped it into the first issue of the *Colonial Monthly* of which he had just become editor, aged 22.<sup>45</sup>

When Clarke was sixteen, his father was stricken down with paralysis and his finances found to be in disorder. ‘Poor Clarke is on the voyage out to Australia, his father having met with a paralysis of the brain,’ Gerard wrote to Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 22 March 1863.<sup>46</sup> Norman White suggests that Marcus’s description in a letter to Cyril of a sunset at sea on the voyage influenced Gerard’s poem ‘A Vision of Mermaids’.<sup>47</sup>

In Australia Marcus was first found employment in a bank. He gave his own account of this brief experience in an essay ‘On Business Men’: ‘The manager sent for me, said that he loved me as his own brother, and that I wore the neatest waistcoats he had ever seen, but that my genius was evidently fettered in a bank. Here was a quarter’s salary in advance, he had no fault to find — quite the reverse — but — but — well, in short, I was not a Business Man.’<sup>48</sup> Gerard’s *Journals* contain an address for Marcus in a diary of 1864: ‘Hislop Clarke, c/- the Bank of Australasia, Melbourne’.<sup>49</sup> But there is no record of any correspondence between them. Gerard had no fond recollections of his time at school, writing to Richard Watson Dixon years later: ‘The truth is I had no love for my schooldays, and wished to banish the remembrance of them, even, I am ashamed to say, to the degree of neglecting some people who had been very kind to me.’<sup>50</sup> Clarke seems to have been one of those he neglected.

Clarke’s feelings about Highgate School were similar. Cyril recalled of Clarke: ‘He never professed to be very happy at school nor to have any particular affection for the majority of his schoolfellows.’ (41) Cyril is the only schoolfellow with whom Clarke is known to have maintained a correspondence. Clarke wrote on ‘Speech Days and School Days’ in *The*

*Australasian*, 28 December 1867: 'The happiest days of one's life one's school days? A thousand times no. I could tell such tales — but no, calm yourself, reader, I will restrain myself.'<sup>51</sup>

Clarke maintained a correspondence with Cyril for the rest of his short life. Cyril used the letters as a basis for his biography of Clarke, and they are an invaluable record of the young writer's experiences. The biography languished in typescript in the Mitchell Library until 2009, when it was finally published. And though Marcus seems not to have corresponded with Gerard, Cyril kept him informed of his brother's career. At Oxford Gerard came under the influence of Cardinal Newman, and was received into the Catholic church in 1866. Marcus wrote to Cyril:

I am not surprised ... I always thought he had a leaning that way. Indeed, for an imaginative, clever *and yet timid mind* (the italics are his own) the Romish Church is the only one which satisfies; the others are but 'leather and prunella'. Protestantism in its purest form is simply a religion of the intellect; it offers no safeguard, no 'rock of defence'; it stretches forth no helping hand to the sinking, struggling wretch who feels the waters of scepticism closing o'er him. Protestantism is like a gothic building on a barren shore, stern, cold, icily regular, freezingly beautiful. Romanism is a gorgeous Moorish palace, deep-embowered in foliage, surrounded with glowing flowers, brilliant colours, and viewed by the light of a tropical sunset. Protestantism is as a stern master saying, 'Believe or Perish!' Romanism is as a loving Mother crying, 'Here is Refuge! Here is Peace! Here is Love!'

For a man who feels that he must believe something, that he must have some standing-place amid the shifting sands of infidelity, rationalism, spiritualism and scepticism, the Protestant Church seems cold and dismal and its teaching but as the apples of Sodom that turn to ashes

in the mouth. Romanism calls aloud to him, through her hundreds of agents, saying, 'Come! Believe! Put your trust wholly in me! Give yourself up to me, I will save you!' Happy is the man who *can* believe! I cannot, but am no desperate destroyer; no denier of God and Heaven! I am rather as one who, wandering through the pleasant gardens of Faith and implicit belief, has stumbled upon the stern rocks that border them; the rocks of Reason and Practicality and Materialism, and stunned by the fall is no more able to return to the pleasant paths and rest with heart at ease upon the dewy turf but, must cling to the rugged and sharp stones around him lest he fall into the raging sea of despair and utter incredulity that boils and seethes beneath him. (151–2)

After his failure at banking, Clarke spent a couple of years as a jackaroo on two properties in which his Uncle James had an interest, Swinton and Ledcourt in western Victoria. But by 1867 he was back in Melbourne as theatre critic on the daily *Argus*. In 1868 Gerard became a novitiate of the Society of Jesus at Manresa in Roehampton, and then from 1870 until August 1873 he was resident at St Mary's Hall seminary at Stonyhurst in Lancashire. Clarke spent Christmas 1872 and New Year 1873 up-country at Ledcourt, troubled by debt, unhappy in his marriage. 18 and 25 January 1873 *The Australasian* published Clarke's 'Holiday Peak', in which his unfulfilled hopes of literary success in London are allowed expression in a story about alternative futures, set in the mountain region in which he had been staying. Remembering his former school friend Gerard, he speculates about what alternative futures he and Gerard might have had, what successful careers as writer and artist there might have been.

Passing by an old house which stood back from the others  
in the terrace, my attention was caught by a crimson scarf

trailing from one of the upper windows. 'An artist lives there,' was my first thought, for nowhere in the world save in the pictures of Prout do we see bits of colour floating about in that fashion.

'Yes, you are right,' said a young man, emerging from the well-dressed crowd which throngs in spring the steps of the Academy.

It was Gerard! Gerard my boy friend, who fled from Oxford to Stonyhurst, and embraced the discipline of Loyola. 'Gerard, what means this?'

'Dear old fellow,' said he, putting his arm round my neck in the fond old schoolboy fashion, 'it means that I thought better of my resolve, and followed out the natural bent of my talents. My picture, the "Death of Alcibiades", is the talk of the year. I shall soon be as famous as you.'

'As I! You jest. A poor devil banished to Bush Land, tied neck and heels in debt, soon slips out of the memory even of his friends.'

'So you persist in that dream about Australia! Surely you know that the fortune was recovered; that your year of poverty but served to correct your boyish extravagances, and that in easy circumstances you banished Poins and Pistol, and settled down to the career you chose!'

'Gerard, you are laughing at me!'

'Come into your own house, then, and be convinced,' said Gerard.

My house, it appeared, was a villa at Richmond; the railway station was sufficiently near to take me into town when town-talk was needed, and yet the cottage in its charm of park and river was sufficiently far from London smoke to suffer one's soul to breathe freely.

'I wonder,' said Gerard, 'that with the horses you keep you *ever* travel by the train?'

'My horses, then, are considered good?'

'Horses and books are your only extravagance. It is lucky that your income is not sufficiently large to suffer you to indulge a taste for pictures. You had better put down your yacht, and buy my "Death of Cromwell".'

'No, no,' I said dreamily, accepting this novel position; 'I always had a taste for yachting — but come in and let us converse.'

'You dine with Carabas tonight, remember,' said Gerard; 'Balthazar Claës and Byles Gridley will be there. I know you affect to dislike dinners, but the Marchioness is a good soul, and you must not disappoint her.'

'True,' said I, 'she is; and after presenting my eldest daughter, too. I shall certainly come.'

'The *Superfine Review* has cut up your last book, as usual,' remarked Gerard, turning over the papers on the horseshoe-table; 'but to an author whose readers are counted by millions, and to whom Chapman and Hall give £5,000 a volume, a sneer in the *Superfine* is not of much consequence.'

'No, indeed,' I replied, feeling much as if someone had taken away my head and left me a bubble of air in place of it. 'Besides, I write for the *Slaughterer*, and the two papers are at daggers drawn.'

'Ah! lucky fellow,' said Gerard, throwing open the window to inhale the perfume of my rose-garden. 'How different things *might have been* if you hadn't taken your uncle's advice.'

It becomes all too much for Marcus.

'Gerard, my dear fellow,' said I, rising, 'I — I feel a little confused; leave me for a while. We will meet at dinner.'

‘Very well,’ said Gerard. ‘I will take Constantia for a drive.’

‘Constantia! What, not the girl we — ?’

‘The same, dear old fellow.’

‘And she did not marry Count Caskowsky?’

‘Count Caskowsky be confounded! No; she married me. We have three children. *Sans adieu!*’<sup>52</sup>

‘Holiday Peak’ became the title story of Clarke’s first collection of stories in 1873. In 1874 his great novel of the convict system, *His Natural Life*, was published in book form. Then in September 1874 he began serializing a new novel in the *Australian Journal*, *Chidiack Tichbourne, or the Babington Conspiracy. An historical romance of the days of Queen Elizabeth*. In *His Natural Life* Clarke had drawn on the contemporary Tichborne case, in which Arthur Orton, a butcher from Wagga Wagga, claimed to be the missing English heir Roger Tichborne. With *Chidiack Tichbourne* Clarke was clearly exploiting the notoriety of the name, though it is an historical novel about another real life Tichbourne’s participation in the Babington conspiracy to set the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne in place of Elizabeth.

A jolly historical romp, the novel makes early use of that classic line of spymaster to agent when Sir Francis Walsingham tells Walter Gerrard ‘I do not pay you to think’. Gerrard is a government agent, tracking down Jesuits. His name and his quarry suggest that Clarke was at some level thinking of his former school friend now become a Jesuit. Gerard, indeed, had an interest in the contemporary Tichborne trial himself, writing about it to his mother, and in 1873 attending and enjoying Lord Chief Justice Cockburn’s summing up.

It is not known whether Gerard was ever aware of Clarke’s career as a writer. Cyril may have mentioned it, but Gerard, his own attempts at publication only sporadically successful, may not have wanted to know. Clarke had known of and shared Gerard’s literary and artistic interests during their schooldays, but, like most people, seems to have been

unaware of the continuation of Gerard's vocation as a poet. 21 August 1884 Gerard wrote to Robert Bridges that only eleven friends had been given his poetry to read.<sup>53</sup> It was not collected until Bridges's edition of 1918. Both died young, Clarke in 1881, aged 35, Gerard in 1889, aged 45. In both cases their fame was to be posthumous.

# **‘A Friend of My People at Home’: Marcus Clarke and Captain Frederick Standish**

16 March 1863 Marcus Clarke set sail for Melbourne from Plymouth. His father, suddenly struck down with paralysis, had been taken to a hospital for the insane, his financial affairs in complete disorder. Marcus, his expectations evaporated, was packed off to Australia where his Uncle James was a judge of the Court of Mines and of the County Court of Ararat in Victoria.

Marcus arrived in Melbourne on 7 June 1863, and promptly disappeared. In *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography* Ian McLaren quotes documents preserved in the Melbourne Savage Club about the occasion.<sup>54</sup> 10 June Marcus’s uncle James Langton Clarke sent a telegram from Ararat to Captain Standish, the Chief Commissioner of Police: ‘Marcus Andrew Clarke my nephew aged seventeen arrived by *Wellesley* from London on Sunday. Mr Lamoile, Criterion Hotel, St. Kilda promised to go on board for him. Have heard nothing from either of them though I telegraphed Mr Lamoile yesterday. As he had three hundred pounds (300) something may have happened to him. I am anxious to know if he is safe. Langton Clarke, Judge.’

Captain Standish put out a memo to Superintendent Nicolson the same day: ‘For immediate inquiry. Shd any information be procured this evening, I wish it to be sent to my private residence. Frederick Standish, C.C.P.’ The following day C.H. Nicolson sent a memo for immediate



delivery: 'The young man Marcus Andrew Clarke arrived at the Criterion Hotel last night with his luggage, and a letter to that effect was forwarded to Judge Clarke from the landlord by last night's post. M.A. Clarke left the hotel about noon today, having been invited out to dine.'

At various times in the future Marcus's life was to intersect with that of Captain Standish, the Chief Commissioner of Police.

The Clarke family had strong connections with Australia. Marcus's father's second brother, James Langton Clarke, had emigrated to Victoria in 1855. His father's eldest brother, Sir Andrew Clarke, had been Governor of Western Australia from February 1846 till his death a year later. Sir Andrew's son, also called Andrew, was posted to Van Diemen's Land in 1846 where he was private secretary to Governor Denison for six years. In 1852 was appointed the first Surveyor-General and Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands for Victoria, and Member of Parliament for Emerald Hill, positions he held until his return to England in 1858. According to Geoffrey Serle 'he was known to some of his contemporaries as "Spicy Andrew".'<sup>55</sup> Knighted in 1873, from 1873–75 he was governor of the Straits Settlements, and then served on the council of the Viceroy of India.

Andrew had been brought up in part by Marcus's father and uncle James while his own father was absent abroad on military duties. He corresponded regularly from Australia with Marcus's father. R.H. Vetch in his *Life of Andrew Clarke* records: 'When his uncle's health suddenly broke down, Andrew Clarke sent his uncle's only son Marcus out to Australia at his own expense and gave him a start in life.'<sup>56</sup>

Judge James Langton Clarke was entrusted with looking after the young Marcus. Annie Baxter Dawbin recorded in her *Journal*, 26 June 1864, seeing 'Judge Clarke and his nephew' at the opera for a performance of *Le Prophète*.<sup>57</sup> Judge Clarke initially arranged employment for Marcus in the Bank of Australasia. It was not a success, and Marcus was then sent to a couple of Wimmera properties in which Judge Clarke had an interest, Swinton and Ledcourt near Stawell. However, as Cyril Hopkins remarks in his biography of Marcus, 'he had begun to feel he was not adapted to the pursuit of sheep-farming.'<sup>58</sup>

Captain Standish then offered Clarke the chance of an alternative, joining the mounted police. Cyril Hopkins quotes a letter Clarke wrote to him about the offer:

But though the billet is a good one I should have to go to some infernal hole on the border and perhaps get shot by some old 'lag'! ... I may perhaps accept it. Heaven knows! ... You must not confuse the mounted troopers with the home police; they are quite another kind of cattle. The inspectors and superintendents are all gentlemen, most of them old army men, and a troop is not by any means to be despised. One gets a house, a servant and four horses free; and in the non-settled districts is pretty well 'monarch of all one surveys.'

Captain Standish, the chief, was in the Royal Horse Artillery and is a friend of my people at home. His offer is rather a compliment than otherwise. But there will be no station quarters, no comfortable escort duty, no government balls for me. I expect that I shall have to go 'high up', and may possibly even have the 'Black Police' ... Needs must, however, when the old gentleman drives! I often wonder how my life will end; the beginning of it is strange enough, God knows! What a change from all my old plans and hopes; the Foreign Office, jollity, good society, hunters, crack balls and diplomacy!<sup>59</sup>

A number of literary figures had joined the mounted police. Some of them Clarke came to know well, like the poets Richard Horne and Adam Lindsay Gordon and the novelist George Walstab. Clarke featured Horne as a mounted policeman in the serial version of *His Natural Life* in the *Australian Journal*, January 1872: 'Our captain seemed no less wild. He was dressed in an old frock-coat, high mud-boots, and a slouched hat. He wore his hair in long curls, sported a most elegant and curly moustache,

which hung down in the most picturesque manner; carried a revolver in his belt, and pistols in his holsters; and rode habitually at full gallop. Who do you think he was? No less a person than the poet and author, Horsa Hengist — You remember Edgar Poe's review of his book?

In South Australia Adam Lindsay Gordon had enlisted in the mounted police ten days after his arrival in Adelaide in 1853, aged 20. In 'The Friend of Charley Walker,' Brian Elliott quotes a letter Gordon wrote to Charley Walker back in Worcester:

We have an easy billet of it here, whether a man likes a position depends more on himself than anyone but we have fine times of it really. The Mounted Police are all well mounted and well armed in a sort of undress cavalry uniform and they are armed with carbines, pistols and long dragoon swords. I was very near getting an inspectorship or captaincy but the rules compel a man properly speaking to serve as a trooper, many of our young fellows are gentlemen though not all and capital fellows some of them are ...<sup>60</sup>

Another former mounted policeman was Clarke's friend George Walstab, who wrote two episodes of the serial of Clarke's first novel *Long Odds* when Clarke was unconscious and incapacitated from a serious riding accident. In an obituary of Walstab, George Gordon McCrae recalled the office of Clarke's *Colonial Monthly* magazine: 'The walls of the editor's den were frescoed, or rather pencilled with topical and character sketches, battle-pieces, etc., but chief among these, and over the fireplace, G.A.W. on a fiery charger just thrown back upon his haunches, above the legend, "Yes, it is true, gentlemen, that I was once a policeman ... but then ... ye gods! What a policeman!!!"' And in 'The Golden Age of Australian Literature' McCrae records of the portrait: 'This was Walstab, who before he went out to India had served in the "Cadets", who in their blue and silver lace used to be the cynosure of petticoated Melbourne.'<sup>61</sup>

There may have been a personal motive behind Captain Standish's

offer to Marcus, the reciprocation of a favour done to him some years earlier. Standish had known Marcus's cousin Andrew. Both were born in 1824, and both entered the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich in 1840. Andrew was commissioned in the Royal Engineers, Standish in the Royal Artillery.

Standish's career has been splendidly told by Paul de Serville.<sup>62</sup> 'One of the most aristocratic of 1850s immigrants,' de Serville writes, he was commissioned second lieutenant in 1843, and for a while was aide-in-waiting at Dublin Castle. In 1852 he left England under an assumed name, Francis C. Selwyn, to avoid gambling debts. '*J'aime le peuple, mais j'ai toujours eu la bourgeois en horreur*,' he wrote in his diary on board ship. He spent a couple of years on the Victorian goldfields, prospecting unsuccessfully, and running a ginger beer establishment, which supplied sly grog. 'Part-dandy, part-military worldling, part-heavy duty swell,' writes de Serville, 'his brief comments on polite society could come from the pen of a Radical.'<sup>63</sup>

Marcus Clarke's class attitudes were not dissimilar. Cyril Hopkins quotes a letter from him:

I was somewhat of a 'swell' (God help me!) — I was sent to the land of radicals and mob-law. I was fond of art and literature; I came where both are unknown, I was conversant with the manners of a class; I came where 'money makes the gentleman'. I hated vulgarity; I came where it reigns supreme ... I see daily before me a pit into which I dread to fall; the pit of vulgarity, ignorance, slovenliness and radicalism. In a word I dread lest I become like others.<sup>64</sup>

In later years, Henry Gyles Turner recalled, Clarke 'became bitterly caustic in his fanciful comments on the smug world, which makes up the majority of our fellow creatures, and his radicalism was very red.'<sup>65</sup>

Standish was at a very low ebb when he first re-encountered Andrew Clarke in Australia, impoverished, unemployed, desperate. Paul

de Serville informs me that 12 October 1853 Standish recorded in his diary, now in the State Library of Victoria, how they talked 'over old times at the RMA.' 23 January 1854 he recorded staying the night at Merri Creek, Andrew's house, where they 'indulged in most pleasing reminiscences of the old days at Woolwich'. Standish had 'a shakedown in the drawing room' and 'a jolly large tub' the next morning. Andrew promised to urge his claims and successfully assisted him to become Assistant Commissioner at Bendigo. It was a crucial stepping-stone. In 1855 Standish was appointed Protector of the Chinese at Bendigo, and in 1857 Warden of the Gold Fields at Sandhurst.<sup>66</sup> The following year he rose even higher. Robert Haldane quotes Standish's diary, 20 August 1858: 'Heard about 4.30 that I had just been appointed by the Executive to the C.C. of Police.'<sup>67</sup> He was now Chief Commissioner of Police in Victoria, a position he held until 1880.

While at Bendigo, de Serville notes, Standish, although born into a Roman Catholic family, became a Freemason. Andrew Clarke may have been an influence here. In his *History of the Continent of Australia & the Island of Tasmania* Marcus Clarke records under the year 1857 that Andrew Clarke had been appointed Grand Master of the English Constitution of the Melbourne Freemasons.<sup>68</sup> De Serville notes that Standish became Provincial Grand Master of Victoria in 1861.<sup>69</sup>

Clara Aspinall recorded in *Three Years in Melbourne* (1862): 'There are many men of good family out in the colony, holding some of the best appointments in Victoria. The Chief Commissioner of Police is Captain Standish, a member of the ancient family of that name in Lancashire.' 'I believe,' she remarked, 'that Standish was one of those who "stand high in public opinion".'<sup>70</sup> Perhaps her brother, Butler Cole Aspinall, had not imparted the information to her that he gave to the journalist James Smith, who recorded in his diary, now in the Mitchell Library, Sydney: 'Captain Standish — my informant adds — is furnished with a report every morning of the number and the names of those who have spent the night in the better class of brothels. The record must be a curious one and calculated to lift the veil from the secret immoralities of many

of the outwardly moral and respectable.<sup>71</sup> Paul de Serville adds in *Pounds and Pedigrees*: 'In evidence which was suppressed, the parliamentary committee of inquiry into the police force heard an allegation that Standish had given a dinner at which the women present were naked and their chairs were covered in black velvet the better to show off the whiteness of their skin.'<sup>72</sup>

In Marcus Clarke's 1865 account of 'A Day in Melbourne' which Cyril Hopkins published in his life of Clarke, there is a cameo of Standish playing billiards at the Port Phillip Club Hotel: 'See those two men playing now! One is Captain L'Encrier, the Chief Commissioner of Police, and the other is a rich squatter from the Western District. The Captain can beat him easily; see how he plays with him.' And Standish makes a second appearance later, 'Here comes L'Encrier again, having finished his billiards, arm in arm with Manderson, the Commandant of Volunteers.'<sup>73</sup> Marcus, fluent in French, was making one of his puns: L'Encrier was French for inkwell, also known in English as a standish.

Paul de Serville informs me that in his diary Standish recorded dining with Marcus's uncle, Judge Clarke, a number of times over the years. On 27 December 1865 he dined with Judge Clarke 'and his nephew.' And Marcus was one of five men he dined with, 16 March 1866.

In the event, Marcus did not join the mounted police but returned to Melbourne and began a career in journalism on *The Argus*. H.G. Turner recalled Clarke's 'faculty of humorous moralizing that made the broadsheet more entertaining; and he early commenced in the columns of the *Australasian* that series of papers by the "Peripatetic Philosopher", which brought him prominently into notice.'<sup>74</sup> The first column, signed 'Q', appeared on 23 November 1867, to coincide with the arrival in Melbourne of the twenty-three year old Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria's second son.<sup>75</sup> 'Though Bohemian I am loyal,' Q announced the following week, offering some sardonic comments on the celebrations.

To celebrate the royal visit a free banquet was organized in Melbourne, with a whole bullock and twelve sheep barbecued, nine hundred gallons of colonial wine, and 3,452 buns and three hogsheads of

ginger beer for children. The outcome was chaos. Brian Elliott records in his biography *Marcus Clarke* that the event became 'a public scandal ... Clarke contented himself with mildly twitting the critics and affecting boredom. Boredom became one of his witty weapons. The Duke of Edinburgh bored him, and the snobbery which the Royal visit excited bored him more.'<sup>76</sup> Standish was more deeply involved, as Curtis Candler recorded in his diary:

There was a dreadful fiasco at the 'Free Banquet' this afternoon. I was just about starting for it when Standish came in with his eyes filled with dust and in the most filthy state. He told me that the crowd was something fearful, and that the police had lost all control over them. By some unfortunate mismanagement the time of the Prince's arrival had been altered and the result was the people had got frantic at waiting in the heat and dust, had rushed the tables, and were in the wildest disorder. He had fortunately met the Prince as he was going on the ground, and had taken on himself to intercept him and prevent his going. He said that had he gone, he is quite sure that great loss of life must have ensued. Women and children must have been crushed by the crowd pressing forward to any point the Prince may have gone. Having represented this to HRH he exercised a wise discretion and turned back — delegating to Standish the rather awkward and not very gracious task of announcing that he would not appear to the unruly multitude. Standish says the scene was something grand in its tumult, uproar and confusion. They made a lane for him to the raised dais from which he signified HRH's intention of not appearing. The announcement was the signal for the wildest disorder. The platform was rushed, and he was nearly being thrown down. His faithful 'bobbies', however, sallied round him and he at last got away.

Candler adds:

Standish told me the Duke had received an anonymous letter, warning him against himself — stating that he was a notorious gambler and was associated with disreputable characters on the Turf &c — winding up by saying that the writer did not sign his name because if by accident Capt. S. should learn it, such was his vindictiveness he should not consider his life safe &c. The Duke showed the letter to S. himself.<sup>77</sup>

Meanwhile, the Prince had other interests to be catered for. De Serville, drawing on Standish's diary, records:

Both as Chief Commissioner of Police and as a man of the world, Standish was employed to be of service to the Prince, although the first mentions of the Royal visitor in his diary are almost offhand in tone. The day after the *Galatea* arrived, two of the Prince's suite, Lord Newry and Eliot Yorke, dined with Standish at the Club, and afterwards he took them to visit Mrs Fraser. A casual reader might suppose her to be a fashionable Melbourne hostess who gave suppers at London hours. A fashionable hostess of a kind, Mrs Fraser undoubtedly was; she conducted the most sumptuous and well-appointed brothel in Melbourne.<sup>78</sup>

Prostitution was widespread. The bar of the Royal Hotel adjacent to the Theatre Royal, known as the 'saddling paddock', was the haunt of prostitutes. So were the theatres themselves. In *The Golden Age of Australian Opera* Harold Love notes that when W.S. Lyster finally enforced the often proclaimed banning of prostitutes from soliciting for custom in the stalls of the Prince of Wales Opera House, he claimed that the prohibition cost the theatre £1500 a year.<sup>79</sup>



In his first Peripatetic Philosopher column Clarke declared of the original peripatetics:

These ancient *flâneurs* had a dash of the philosophy of the latter Epicureans. They preferred ease to labour, and a quiet observant walk down Athens to a wrangle with other gentlemen in broiling atria or dingy peristyles. There is much to be learnt from street life, and one's 'daily walks abroad' are instructive as well as amusing. To imitate the ancient peripatetics has long been my pleasure. I am a Bohemian ...<sup>80</sup>

Exploring the city as a theatrical site was something of a nineteenth-century pastime. Walt Whitman kept a notebook recording his observations of New York street scenes. Charles Dickens used to get Wilkie Collins to accompany him around London on such expeditions. In London in 1851, de Serville records, Standish had 'toured the slums of St Giles, Westminster, Southwark, and Shoreditch with a detective and found the sights "very curious and horrible".' An anecdote in *The Bulletin*, 13 August 1881, records of Clarke:

One peculiar fancy he had was to wander around the city in search of 'faces'. The writer has accompanied him on many of these weird pilgrimages, which embraced all quarters of the city — from the slums about Little Bourke Street to the aristocratic precincts of Toorak. In these expeditions, the deceased author's strangest fantasies were exhibited. For instance, he would pretend to recognize in living members of the lower orders startling portraits of dead-and-gone celebrities, whom he insisted lived again on earth in their persons. Thus a Collingwood bus driver was Julius Caesar, and a barmaid in a Bourke-street hotel the 'positive presentment of Cleopatra.' In a like manner he would

discover extraordinary beauty in various types of both sexes  
where none to the ordinary observer existed ...

There was a literary tradition of such explorations, from Eugene Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842–43) and Mayhew's articles for the *Morning Chronicle* that became *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851) to Jack London's *People of the Abyss* (1903). Clarke's explorations of the city in due course bore literary fruit, his three-part series 'Night Scenes in Melbourne' appearing in *The Argus* in 1868.

Clarke had expert guidance. He writes in the first article, 'Melbourne Streets at Midnight': 'We have recently, with the assistance of the police, penetrated into all these places.'<sup>81</sup> In the third article, 'The Chinese Quarter,' he is more specific about his guide:

We need no magic horse or flying carpet to take us into China; all we need do is to turn down Little Bourke-street, and our friend F — S —, once a mandarin, now a distinguished member of the detective force, will point out to us the "manners and customs" of his countrymen.<sup>82</sup>

F — S — was not Frederick Standish, but Fook Shing, one of Standish's detectives. Standish's appointment as Protector of the Chinese at Bendigo in 1855 had given him a familiarity with the Chinese community. Ken Oldis details Fook Shing's career in *The Chinawoman*. He was 'one of the three headmen appointed by Captain Standish at the Bendigo camps'. After a period as an informer he 'reappeared as a "detective" in the metropolis. He assumed the role on an informal basis before being officially appointed in early 1868.' A notorious gambler, opium addict and dealer, he claimed expenses 'spent for opium on inquiries'; Oldis notes that 'an embittered colleague described Fook Shing as doing nothing but smoking opium and falling asleep in the detective office'.<sup>83</sup>

Clarke writes: 'We commenced our tour of inspection by a visit to a gambling-house. On a word from F — S — we were instantly admitted.'

Fook Shing clearly knew the quarter well, taking Clarke to an opium den and then to an eating house:

The horrible stench that rolled out of it gave no promise of good entertainment. Our guide, however, seemed to enjoy the odour, and endeavouring to forget the existence of such things as noses, we followed him in ...

We had hoped that the cookshop would have completed the tour; but F — S — informed us that this was only the aristocratic portion of the city, and requested us to come and see where ‘poor fellow live.’

The final stop was at a brothel:

The faces of the girls were of the most repulsive kind, but some spark of feeling seemed to be left in one of them, who, with some confusion, requested F — to let us know that she was not always ‘a Chinaman’s woman.’ Young girls from the ages of sixteen to twenty are mostly employed in this traffic, and the old Chinaman will contract to keep and clothe them for a certain period.<sup>84</sup>

Standish’s supervision of the investigation into a murder of one such girl in Melbourne’s Chinatown in 1856 is dealt with in Ken Oldis’s *The Chinawoman*.

Standish was elected to the Melbourne Club in 1857. He remained a member until his death, taking up permanent residence there when the new club house was completed. In May 1868 Marcus was elected a member. He had the right family connections. Both James Langton Clarke and Andrew Clarke had been elected. It was very much a conservative, upper-class, establishment, rich man’s venue. H.M. Hyndman, visiting in 1869, wrote of it enthusiastically in his autobiography some forty years later: ‘I have always remembered my sojourn there off and on for two years. I

became very intimate with many of its members and I saw from the first what not a few Englishmen coming out to the colony failed unfortunately to recognize, that before the gold fever and spirit of adventure drew them out to Victoria, many of these habitués had seen and enjoyed pretty nearly all that was to be seen and enjoyed of European society.<sup>85</sup>

In the 1880s Hyndman was to become one of the first English Marxists, founding the Social Democratic Federation, whose members included William Morris before he left to found the Socialist League, and George Bernard Shaw who left to join the Fabian Society. A wealthy, upper-class Cambridge educated radical, Hyndman was a model for John Tanner in Shaw's *Man and Superman*.

In due course Hyndman reviewed Clarke's *Long Odds* for *The Argus*, 2 July 1869, and he and Marcus met and, Hyndman records, became 'excellent friends'. De Serville informs me that in November 1870 Captain Standish recorded in his diary dining with F.W. Haddon (the editor of *The Argus*), Clarke, Curtis Candler and Hyndman. Clarke at this time was serializing *His Natural Life* in the *Australian Journal* and the 'Old Stories Retold' in *The Australasian* that became *Old Tales of a Young Country*. Hamilton Mackinnon wrote in *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*:

While thus rapidly rising in the rank of Australia's litterateurs, Marcus Clarke was to live at a rate far exceeding his income. In other words, he became a member of the Melbourne Club, and tempted by its glitter, threw himself into its extravagant ways with all the force of his impulsive, Bohemian nature; — and, naturally, got involved in debt. From this there was no recourse but to borrow, and so the presence of the usurer was sought.<sup>86</sup>

When the biography was reprinted in *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke* the specific reference to the Melbourne Club was omitted. Mackinnon's uncle Lachlan Mackinnon, co-proprietor of *The Argus*, was a club member, but not Hamilton himself.<sup>87</sup>

Mackinnon's claim is dismissed by Henry Gyles Turner, who was elected a member in 1880. Turner writes:

This statement is wholly indefensible. Clarke was a member of the Melbourne Club for a short period, having been elected about six weeks before his marriage; but to talk of the glittering attractions of that abode of all the conservative conventional proprieties having led him astray, is simply preposterous. As a rule young men find its dullness rather oppressive, and certainly it has never given any indications of developing fastness or bohemianism.<sup>88</sup>

The Melbourne Club may have seemed conservative and conventional to Turner when he was elected in 1880, but it had had a number of members who had maintained a more dandyish mode of life. In *The Golden Age of Australian Opera* Harold Love sketches in something of the background of Melbourne's upper bohemia: 'In the sixties, among its official and professional classes, many of them sons of respectable families who had come to the colony to escape scandals at home, it possessed a "fast" set of latter-day Regency rakes for whom removal had not served as an incentive to reformation ... Sir Redmond Barry, Judge of the Supreme Court, whose elegant neo-classical town house still stands in Clarendon Street, East Melbourne, as a living defiance of everything high-Victorian, was the patron spirit of this group aided by the witty barrister-politicians B.C. Aspinall and R.D. Ireland.'<sup>89</sup>

Marcus's cousin 'Spicy Andrew' had belonged to this milieu. So did Andrew's friend Captain Standish, the Chief Commissioner of Police. So did Standish's friend Curtis Candler, the Melbourne coroner. All were members of the Melbourne Club except for Ireland, who was a member of the Union Club, as were both Aspinall and Standish. De Serville comments: 'In private, Candler belonged to that group of worldly clubmen' and he describes the nature of the milieu:

the world of the *flâneur*, the gourmet, card-player, pillar of the turf, and anecdotalist. They created, in the Melbourne Club, on the lawn at Flemington, picnicking in the Survey Paddock, or watching the opera from the club box, a small refuge from the exigencies of the Antipodes and from the angularities of other colonists, and a place (pale *simulacrum* of the bow-window of White's) where they and their friends could spend their free moments in the congenial company of 'our lot.'<sup>90</sup>

Ronald McNicoll records in his history of the *Melbourne Club*:

Standish and Candler, both living in the club house, were constant users of the library, and it was Standish who persuaded the committee to spend £150, a large sum, on books in August 1865. Mr Mullen submitted a list, and £200 worth were ordered from England. It was Candler who advocated a collection of Australian works for the library, 'no matter how inaccurate, or absurd, they may be' (he was possibly thinking of Bonwick) and thus laid the foundation of the club's fine collection of Australiana. Brough Smyth and Marcus Clarke were probably the first members to present their own literary works to the club.<sup>91</sup>

Brough Smith, Secretary and Chief Inspector of Mines in Victoria, had served under Marcus's cousin Andrew in the 1850s, and in 1878, R.H. Vetch notes, was invited by him to India to report on the gold discoveries of the Wynaad valley.<sup>92</sup>

The Melbourne Club was exclusive and expensive. In 1868 the journalists and freelance writers came up with something more accessible and affordable. Hamilton Mackinnon recorded in the *Austral Edition* that

about May, 1868 — Clarke, in conjunction with some dozen

literary friends, started a modest club for men known in the fields of Literature, Art, and Science — THE YORICK ...

The Yorick Club was the outcome of the literary and Bohemian — analogous terms in those days — spirits who used then to assemble nightly at the Café of the Theatre Royal to discuss coffee and intellectual subjects. These gatherings grew so large in the course of time that it was found necessary, in order to keep the communion up, to secure accommodation, where the flow of genius, if nothing else, might have full play without the interruption and intrusion from those deemed outside the particular and shining pale. Accordingly a room was rented and furnished in Bohemian fashion, with some cane chairs, a deal table, a cocoa-nut matting and spittoons. In this the first meeting was held, in order to baptise the club. The meeting in question debated, with the assistance of sundry pewters and pipes — not empty, gentle reader — the subject warmly from the first proposition made by Clarke, that the club should be called ‘Golgotha,’ or the place of skulls, to the last, ‘alas, poor Yorick!’ This brief name was accepted as appropriate, and the somewhat excited company adjourned to a Saturday night’s supper at a jovial Eating-House, too well known to fame.<sup>93</sup>

Joseph Johnson writes that letters of invitation had been sent to prospective members in early May 1868:

A club to be composed of literary men and those taking a special interest in literature art or science has been started. You are requested to allow yourself to be invited as an original member and to put in an appearance at the Club room (over the *Punch* office) on Saturday evening the 9th inst at 10 o’clock. Yours, Marcus Clarke, Hon. Sec.<sup>94</sup>

George Gordon McCrae records in 'The Golden Age of Australian Literature' that the membership qualifications were in due course relaxed:

It seeming good in later days to relax the qualification clause a little, persons of literary tastes and leanings though not themselves literary came to be admitted within the charmed circle. The stage came to be very fairly represented, the medical profession followed, artists fell in gladly, the journalists we had with our other poor from the beginning, but one day when the name of the Chief Commissioner of Police appeared on the notice board the majority were filled with astonishment and all sorts of questions pertinent to the occasion (if impertinent in themselves) were asked.

McCrae continues:

The 'qualification' still obtaining though in a modified degree, two members, according to my information, were detailed to wait upon the Chief Commissioner (himself a man at once genial and humorous) with the view of ascertaining his qualifications for membership.

The question politely but firmly put, was met at once by the terse and apposite reply, 'Gentlemen of the Yorick, am I not the editor of the *Police Gazette*!'

They had got their answer and that with military promptitude; bowed themselves out and returned to make their report. Soon after, the new member was duly elected. Should any modern doubt the accuracy of this story as given, it might be competent for him to inquire at the club whether at some time during the latter sixties the name of Captain Frederick Charles Standish, Rtd., did not appear upon the roll and thereunder the title of Chief Commissioner of Police. He was a very busy officer and



perhaps his visits were like those of the angels, 'few and far between'. For myself I may say I never happened to be on the spot when he happened to look in, whether to taste of our curious vintages or to scribble a note on club paper.<sup>95</sup>

Needless to say, the Yorick was a men only club, and needless to say no one writing about it seems to have felt the need to remark on this. This was the heyday of men's clubs. And these were the great years of bachelor literature. Even if some of the bachelors were married, like Henry Kendall and Adam Lindsay Gordon. Others were yet to be, Clarke in July 1869, George Gordon McCrae in July 1871, Patrick Moloney in 1876. A few, like B.F. Kane, A. Brook Smith and Captain Standish, held out till the end and never married. The Yorick Club was a space where bachelor literature could continue to be celebrated, secure from the invasions of womankind. A safe haven.

Membership of the Melbourne, Union, Yorick, and Atheneum clubs may have been a necessary part of the Chief Commissioner's police business. But Standish was undoubtedly a clubman by choice. In *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*, John Sadleir summed up Standish:

His short service previously in the Royal Artillery did not seem to have left its mark upon him, for he showed few evidences of military training. He belonged to a high-class English county family, had received a liberal education, and possessed many natural gifts that might have placed him in a higher position in public respect and favour than he ever reached. He was a man of wider views than his immediate predecessor and of fairer judgement. I doubt, however, whether he possessed as high a sense of duty. He was too much a man of pleasure to devote himself seriously to the work of his office, and his love of pleasure led him to form intimacies with some officers of like mind, and to think less of others who were much more worthy of regard.<sup>96</sup>

In *'The Difficulties of My Position': the Diaries of Prison Governor John Buckley Castieau, 1855–1884*, Castieau records many meetings at the Yorick Club with fellow member Marcus Clarke. 30 July 1872 he records meeting the Chief Commissioner of Police:

Went to a meeting called for the purpose of establishing a Society for the Aid of Discharged Prisoners. When I went into the room I saw the Dean, a number of clergymen of different denominations and Captain Standish. The Captain hailed me with apparent thankfulness. He said until I came he felt as he were the only sinner in the crowd and that he was entirely out of his element.<sup>97</sup>

Clarke and Standish were never close friends. But they had a number of acquaintances in common. Clarke was a good friend of Adam Lindsay Gordon; Gordon's friends Robert and Herbert Power were both members of the Melbourne Club and, de Serville records, Herbert was an old friend of Standish. In *A Century Galloped By: The First Hundred Years of the Victoria Racing Club*, John Pacini records that the two Power brothers together with Standish and George Watson were at the meeting at Scott's Hotel in 1864 when the VRC was established, and Herbert Power, Standish and Watson were members of the first committee. Gordon on horseback was the subject of a number of paintings by Thomas Lyttleton, some commissioned by Herbert Power. De Serville writes that when appointed Chief Commissioner of Police 'it was symptomatic of Standish's attitude and priorities that he soon replaced Superintendent S.E. Freeman, the chief officer in the city of Melbourne, with Thomas Lyttleton.'<sup>98</sup> Annie Baxter Dawbin remarked in her *Journal*, 24 April 1862: 'Colonel Hadden says Tom Lyttleton is one of the two wildest most dissipated men he ever met.' In her biography of Gordon in *The Australasian*, 23 December 1933, Eileen Kaye wrote that Captain Standish was among those present at Gordon's funeral.<sup>99</sup>

The opera producer William Saurin Lyster was another friend of

Clarke's, and Clarke dedicated *Four Stories High* to him in 1877. 17 May 1878 *The Argus* reported:

It being known that Mr W.S. Lyster, the well-known impresario, who for 17 years has supplied the Victorian public with opera, is compelled to visit Europe on account of ill-health, a few of his friends met together yesterday to devise the best means of presenting him with some pleasant testimonial of their esteem, of his private worth, and appreciation of his labours on behalf of the musical public. Captain Standish was in the chair, and Clarke and Herbert Power were amongst those present.

Standish is named in another episode involving Clarke, reported in *The Age*, 24 June 1878, and reprinted in the *Brisbane Courier*, 10 July and *The Queenslander*, 13 July:

The tele-gastrograph is a machine by which, through the aid of electric currents, the flavor of any food or liquor can be transmitted by wire to any distance, and the sensation of eating or drinking conveyed by merely placing the end of the wire between the teeth. The inventor never pretended that any actual nourishment was conveyed by his process. He merely claimed that the sensation of partaking of rich viands and costly wines could be imparted to people a hundred miles away from the operator — written on their palates, in fact; and that the number who could receive this sensation from a small quantity of food, and the length of time that it could be made to last, were practically unlimited; and after the experiments of last night all doubt as to the correctness of his calculations is at an end. The private trials of his machine on a small scale within the last few weeks satisfied all who witnessed them; but at the request of the

inventor public notice was withheld till he had perfected his arrangements so as to give the world an opportunity of judging for itself. It was arranged that at 8 o'clock yesterday evening the experiments were to commence. The machine was worked at the Victoria Club, and a number of well-known gentlemen kindly gave their services to assist the operator. Messrs Ellery and S.W.M'Gowan took charge of the electric battery. Mr Butters, Mr Sayers, the well-known professor of cookery, Mr Hay, of the Athenæum Club, and Mr Phipps, of Clement's Café, undertook to see that the soups and food were properly cooked and were kept hot. Dr Bleasdale and Sir Redmond Barry looked after the wines, and Judge Cope and Mr Gatehouse after the beer and spirits; while Mr George Kirk, Mr Reginald Bright, and Captain Standish were in readiness to supervise the arrangements for sending a sensation of cigar smoke along the wire after the dinner was disposed of.

It was another of Clarke's inventive spoofs. 'The credit of inventing the tele-gastrograph is solely and entirely due to a gentleman who has been for some years connected with the literary department of this paper,' the *Age* explained.

By the 1880s, however, the world had changed. Not least for both Clarke and Standish. After Judge Clarke retired from the bench and settled in Nice, Sir Redmond Barry was the nearest approximation to a family figure and patron for Marcus. Mackinnon remarks on 'the interest Sir Redmond Barry evinced in the rising *littérateur*, whom he took under his parental wing when obtaining for him the post in the Public Library' in 1870.<sup>100</sup> When, 28 October 1880, Clarke applied for the post of Librarian at the Melbourne Public Library, it was in expectation of the support of Barry, who was chairman of the library's board of trustees.

Then came the trial of Ned Kelly. Kelly's defence counsel, Howard Bindon, had been proposed for membership of the Yorick Club by Clarke

in 1872. Sir Redmond Barry was the judge who sentenced Kelly to death. 'I will see you there where I go!' Kelly promised Barry. 23 November 1880 Barry died, twelve days after Kelly was executed. Clarke, Mackinnon records, 'on hearing of Sir Redmond's death, expressed himself as having lost his best and truest friend.'<sup>101</sup> Clarke was not appointed librarian. In debt, his creditors pressing for payment, he declared bankruptcy, and as a consequence had to tender his resignation from the library. Less than two weeks later, 2 August 1881, he died.

Captain Standish was also in difficulties. As a consequence of two years of police failures in dealing with the Kelly gang, the Berry government forced him to retire in 1880. Friends arranged for him to become chairman of the Victoria Racing Club, a position he held until his death at the Melbourne Club, 13 March 1883. De Serville quotes his obituary from *The Australasian*, 24 March:

When in the full vigour of his health, Captain Standish was credited with the possession of considerable ability as an administrator, but during his closing years he evidenced a loss of firmness which resulted in the police force falling into a state of disorder. This became painfully manifest during the Kelly outbreak, when the conduct of the pursuit was carried out in a manner which led to severe reflections being cast on the higher officers of the force.<sup>102</sup>

In his history of the Victoria Racing Club John Pacini quotes from another obituary of Standish:

He loved to gamble and lost a good deal of money ... It would be no exaggeration to say he was among the most knowledgeable and experienced racing men in Australia. Some years before becoming a foundation member of the VRC at Creswick's inaugural meeting he had been very much a driving force in the old Victoria Turf Club, one of the

two racing clubs the VRC absorbed. The Melbourne Cup was entirely his idea. He had held almost every post there was to hold in the VRC — Committeeman, Handicapper, Steward, Treasurer and finally Chairman to say nothing of being the Club's most skilful race and programme framer.

The VRC runs the annual Standish Handicap in his honour to this day.

# What Do Poets Drink? Gordon, Clarke and Kendall at the Yorick

Concerned about the birds gathering on his windowsill at University House in Canberra, Laurie Hergenhan once asked A.D. Hope what parrots ate or drank.

‘Poets?’ said Hope, ‘I don’t know what they eat, but they’ll drink anything.’

This certainly seems to be the consensus about Australian poets. It is a reputation that has particularly attached itself to the three great writers of the Yorick Club in Melbourne’s 1860s and 1870s, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Kendall, and Marcus Clarke. It might be objected that unlike Gordon and Kendall, Clarke was primarily a prose writer. But his early poems were admired by his school fellow, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and he published poetry throughout his literary career — ‘The Lady of Lynn’ in the *Colonial Monthly* in March 1868, the ‘Verses in a Lady’s Album’ written for H.G. Turner’s wife Helen in May 1869 and recycled in *His Natural Life*, lyrics for the stage such as those in his *Goody Two Shoes*, and *Little Boy Blue*; or, *Sing a Song of Sixpence!* *Harlequin Heydiddle-diddle-’em*, and *the Kingdom of Coins!* *Fairy Extravaganza opening to Pantomime, Dialogue, and Songs*, in 1870, and formal effusions like ‘Victoria’s Farewell to Lady Bowen’ written for music by Alfred Plumptre in 1879.<sup>103</sup> Hamilton Mackinnon assembled twenty-six ‘verses — grave and gay’ for the *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume* and eleven for the fifth and final part of *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*. Ian McLaren lists thirty-five songs by Clarke in his *Bibliography*.<sup>104</sup>

In *My Name is Ross: An Alcoholic's Journey*, Ross Fitzgerald recalled:

When I was fifteen or sixteen and still living in Charles Street, my idea of a good Saturday night was to take a flagon of wine to the nearby Brighton Cemetery and drink on my own in front of Adam Lindsay Gordon's obelisk, which reads, 'Life is only froth and bubble / Two things stand like stone / Kindness in another's trouble / Courage in your own.'

I now think it significant that of all the graves in Brighton Cemetery, I was drawn to that of an alcoholic poet who killed himself at Brighton Beach, where I used to drink so often myself.<sup>105</sup>

Fitzgerald used the same episode for his fictional character Grafton Everest in *All About Anthrax*, remarking, 'Grafton now thought it significant that he, a Church of England Melbourne son, was attracted to the grave of Gordon — a fellow pisspot.' 'The Poet Gordon — Scottish, alcoholic and estranged,' he writes, adding, 'Grafton thought of Gordon as this country's Brendan Behan.'<sup>106</sup>

Yet was Gordon alcoholic? He is often thought of in this way. Leonie Kramer is quite stern about his failings in her 1972 entry on him in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*: 'His fecklessness was apparent early. He himself said that his "strength and health were broken by dissipation and humbug".' And she adds: 'The pattern of Gordon's life was strange. If the purpose of his migration to Australia was to escape the debilitating attractions of the company into which he had fallen as a young man in England, the life that he led merely served to exacerbate his own temperamental weaknesses.'<sup>107</sup>

Yet the evidence suggests that Gordon was not a drinking man. He left England in August 1853, aged nineteen, after he had got himself into trouble by liberating a horse impounded for debt, in order to ride in a Worcestershire steeplechase.<sup>108</sup> Ten days after arriving in Adelaide



he joined the South Australian mounted police. He wrote to his friend Charley Walker back in England that he now drank very little, though he smoked a good deal.<sup>109</sup> George S. Scott, who was a fellow trooper with Gordon, recalled in the *Adelaide Register*, 30 November 1912: ‘Gordon, by the way, very seldom drank too much.’<sup>110</sup>

Gordon served as a trooper for a week short of two years. He spent the next seven years horse-breaking. Father Julian Tenison Woods, who set up the order of the Sisters of St Joseph with Mary MacKillop, recalled in the *Melbourne Review*, April 1884: ‘My introduction to him was at a cattle station, Lake Hawdon, near Guichen Bay. He was breaking in a few horses for Mr Stockdale, the proprietor.’ Stockdale answered his inquiries about Gordon. ‘Mr Stockdale further remarked that there was something above the common in Gordon. He never drank or gambled, two ordinary qualifications of bush hands in those days.’ Tenison Woods added, ‘Those who did not know Gordon attributed his suicide to drink, but I repeat he was most temperate, and disliked the company of drinking men.’<sup>111</sup>

There are occasional recollections of social drinking. At a ceremony at the poet’s grave, *The Argus* reported, 27 June 1892: ‘Mr Whiteman recalled ... many pleasant evenings spent at the Napoleon the Third Hotel in Emerald Hill, at which Gordon lived for a while.’ And the Brighton and Sandringham *Southern Cross* reported, 7 September 1912, that Joseph Summers the composer who had set works by Horne and Kendall, ‘mentioned that Gordon, Ryan, Horne, and himself used to assemble at the Adam and Eve Hotel, in Little Collins Street, and on one occasion Gordon clasped his arms round his (Dr Summers’) neck and said, “If you were a girl I would kiss you.” (Laughter).’

George Gordon McCrae, a fellow member with Gordon, Clarke and Kendall of the Yorick Club and the *Colonial Monthly* circle in 1868–70, recalled in his posthumous memoirs in *Southerly* in 1944 that the *Colonial Monthly* office was supplied with regular refreshment from the Duke of Rothesay hotel across the road; ‘the beer if “Colonial” was of the best, and punctually supplied and delivered at lunch hour.’ J.J. Shillinglaw, who took over as editor of the *Colonial Monthly* after Clarke, ‘had a figure

of himself on the outer side of his door representing a man in a sitting posture with a great gallon measure at his lips, with the legend subscribed "J.J.S. in Liquidation". But McCrae remembered Gordon as abstemious. 'It used to be remarked of him from time to time his avoidance of liquor; which, in the midst of an all-round drinking society, had the effect of keeping him very much outside. He would take a glass of wine out of pure politeness, but there drew the line, over which nobody could lead him. One day, rallying him on his abstemiousness, he took my hand and placing it on his head, laid one of my fingers in a long deep hollow in the bone — I shuddered all over. It was the answer to the question — a skull fracture received in one of his falls in the field ...'<sup>112</sup>

George Riddoch likewise recalled in Humphris and Sladen's *Adam Lindsay Gordon and his Friends in England and Australia*: 'He was a very moderate eater and he seldom drank any spirits, though he smoked a good deal. Mr Riddoch never once saw him the worse for liquor.'<sup>113</sup> George's brother John Riddoch was elected to the South Australian parliament along with Gordon in 1865. In the 1890s the Riddochs established the Coonawarra Fruit Colony, from which the Coonawarra vineyards developed.

15 February 1870, after the long journey back to Melbourne from Yallum where he had been visiting John Riddoch, Gordon wrote: 'On Thursday night I was so tired that I could hardly walk to the telegraph-office, as you may suppose, and on Friday after the race I was not much better, though I did not feel it, having imbibed too freely. Everyone that was with me swears that I was as sober as a judge, by which I infer that everyone that was with me was as drunk as a lord.'<sup>114</sup> It is a rare record of excess.

Gordon's numerous riding accidents left him often in pain. He wrote to John Riddoch, 6 October 1868:

I have not been well lately. I never got over that fall, and since then I have taken to drink. I don't get drunk, but I drink a good deal more than I ought to do, for I have a

constant pain in my head and back, and I get so awfully low-spirited and miserable that if I had a strong sleeping draught near me I am afraid I might take it. I have carried one that I should never awake from ...

When I parted from my wife on the pier and saw the steamer take her away, I felt sure that I should never see her again; and when I got back to Ballarat, and went into the empty house I was very low spirited for two or three days. I used to smoke all night long — I could not sleep — and take a stiff nobbler in the morning when I got up — but I got through my work somehow and settled all my business.<sup>115</sup>

He pulled through. 17 November 1868 he wrote to Riddoch: 'I am taking exercise now and doing work, and I sleep pretty well and eat fairly, and I only drink one glass of grog when I go to bed. Though I smoke nearly as much as ever I never touch opiates in any shape now.'<sup>116</sup>

He had extricated himself from his lease of the unprofitable Ballarat livery stables. A communication from his uncle in England seemed to offer the possibility of permanent financial security: 'He wants me to go home to England. It seems I am the nearest heir to an entailed estate called Esslemont in Scotland. He thinks it a certainty, but I fancy there is a flaw in the entail.'<sup>117</sup> Gordon pursued the claim for the next eighteen months. 4 June 1870 he heard that it had failed.<sup>118</sup> His hopes of the £2000 annual income from the estate were gone. He had no wish to continue riding, and falling, in steeplechases. He resorted like Clarke and Kendall to money-lenders. Alexander Sutherland remarks in *The Development of Australian Literature*: 'He obtained a small sum at the comparatively harmless rate of about 90 per cent per annum.'<sup>119</sup>

Alcohol features in the events leading up to Gordon's death, though not necessarily in excess. 23 June 1870, he called in at the printer's. A.H. Massina recalled:

He expected some money on the day his last book *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*, was published.

He owed me about £75, and said to me, 'I suppose you want some money.'

And I replied, 'Printers generally do.'

Gordon said, 'Well, I'll be up in the morning with a cheque.'<sup>120</sup>

According to Sutherland in the *Melbourne Review*, October 1883, 'Gordon dropped into Clarson and Massina's office in the morning, heard some friendly criticism from Marcus Clarke and others, insisted on knowing how much was due for the book, then went out in search of means to pay the various debts he had imprudently incurred.'<sup>121</sup>

At some point he is said to have been shown a proof of Kendall's favourable review of *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* forthcoming in *The Australasian*. According to Sutherland's later account in *The Development of Australian Literature*, Gordon met Kendall in Collins Street, and the two wandered into the Argus Hotel bar for a rest.<sup>122</sup>

It is not known how many drinks Gordon and Kendall had nor how long they were there. According to Sutherland, they sat for a couple of hours. M.P. Sweeney, writing some sixty years later in *Adam and Eve*, 3 May 1927, says they met not at the Argus Hotel but at the old Adam and Eve Hotel in Little Collins Street and that they had seven shillings between them, and spent it.<sup>123</sup> Sir Frank Madden, later Speaker in the Victorian parliament, questioned these accounts:

I think the story of his meeting Kendall on the evening before he shot himself is also doubtful as I met him a little after four o'clock on that winter's day and walked with him as far as St. Kilda. In justice to him I should say that the most unlikely thing he would do was to spend his last few shillings in drink as he never cared for it, and so far as I knew seldom took it at all. He shows his contempt for it in

his verses. Of one thing I am clear, that when I left him at St. Kilda, he was absolutely sober, but very much depressed and melancholy. He told me that he had asked a friend to lend him £100 to enable him to get to England, but his friend had refused to make the advance and he was most down-hearted and despondent.<sup>124</sup>

Saturday 25 June, *The Argus* ran a report:

#### SUICIDE OF MR A.L. GORDON.

An exceedingly painful feeling was created yesterday morning in Melbourne, particularly among literary and sporting circles, by a report that Mr A.L. Gordon, the well-known poet and gentleman steeplechase rider, had committed suicide by shooting himself in the scrub near the Brighton beach ...

Early on Friday he was missed, but still nothing serious was apprehended until it was found that he had taken his rifle with him. From the little that is known of him after he left the house, it appears that about half-past 7 o'clock in the morning he called at the Marine Hotel, and asked for Mr Prendergast, the landlord, and was informed by his son that he was not then up. On being asked if he should awake him, Mr Gordon said it was of no great consequence. He then had a glass of brandy, and left the house.

The *Age* reported, 27 June:

The sad fate of Mr Adam Lindsay Gordon at Brighton, on Friday morning, was the subject of conversation in the city on Saturday morning, and some interest was felt in the inquest which was held by Mr Candler, district coroner.

Mr Hugh Kelly, gardener, Brighton, said: I know the

deceased. He has been living as a lodger, with his wife, at my house for the last twelve months. I last saw him alive on Thursday night, the 23rd inst. I saw him from nine up to eleven o'clock that night. He had been drinking before he came home, but did not take any more. He was excitable and rather quarrelsome.

Dr James P. Murray said: Deceased was eccentric, on the whole rational, but he was subject to excitement without adequate provocation. He was totally unable to bear spirituous liquor; a very small quantity maddened him immediately. Deceased had had several falls in steeplechasing and hunting. His skull has been fractured on one occasion, and his brain was much affected by these falls. He himself has said he was mad. The brain of deceased I believe, was injured to that extent that he might be subject to delusion, and to attacks of melancholy at times.

Geoffrey Hutton writes in his life of Gordon: 'his widow told her son that she had never known him to drink, although they always kept a bottle of brandy in the house.' According to her son W. Park Low's unpublished typescript *The Real Adam Lindsay Gordon* in the State Library of South Australia, she said he never drank strong drink, and that the night before his death she did not notice that he had taken any drink, nor was he quarrelsome.<sup>125</sup>

Gordon and Clarke met some time in 1868, and Clarke published Gordon in the *Colonial Monthly* that he was editing. Gordon wrote to John Riddoch, 6 October 1868: 'I am going to send you the new *Colonial*, it is a very good magazine. Marcus Clarke, the Editor, is a very nice young fellow.'<sup>126</sup> There is only one surviving letter from Gordon to Marcus Clarke, a letter that was, according to Hamilton Mackinnon, 'kept by him sacredly.' It is an invitation to a session at Scott's Hotel:

Yorick Club.

Dear Clarke, Scott's Hotel, not later than 9.30 sharp.  
Moore will be there. Riddoch and Lyon, Baker and Power,  
besides us; so if 'the Old One' were to cast a net — eh? —  
Yours, A. Lindsay Gordon.<sup>127</sup>

But this was not the only time that they drank together. Clarke and Gordon were both foundation members of the Bohemian Yorick Club that had been established in May 1868. Kendall joined it on his arrival in Melbourne the following year. Henry Gyles Turner recalled in Humphris and Sladen:

When I was treasurer of the Yorick Club, I used to see Gordon there occasionally in the late sixties, about a couple of years before his death. Rather a reticent and downcast-looking man, whose manner did not invite familiarity, though he could brighten up when he got on horsey topics and the glass went round. Like many of the original members of that club you had to 'make a night of it' if you wanted to get the best out of them. All I can say for him is that he was not quite so depressing as poor Kendall, and despite his grievous lack of pence he occasionally let himself go.<sup>128</sup>

There is no doubt that 1860s Melbourne was a heavy-drinking society, but there are no reports of Gordon or Clarke drinking heavily at the Yorick. Indeed, Clarke seems to have been no more of a drinker than Gordon.

In his biography of Marcus Clarke, Cyril Hopkins included an essay Clarke sent to him in 1865, 'A Day in Melbourne':

Melbourne is a dreadful place for drinking; if one meets a friend, the first salutation is, 'How d'ye do! Come and have a drink!' and this in all grades of life. I have seen two doctors,

a distinguished lawyer, and a member of Parliament all partaking of ‘nobblers’ at the bar of an hotel at 11.30 a.m.<sup>129</sup>

In a letter to Hopkins Clarke stressed: ‘I play hard because I don’t care for money. But thank God! I don’t drink hard. Drinking is the curse of the place! I never could see any pleasure in getting drunk.’<sup>130</sup> Clarke concluded his sketch ‘A Mining Township’ in *The Australasian*, 5 November 1870, sardonically: ‘But it is time to “have a drink” — the chief amusement of the place ... To sum up the jollity of Grumbler’s Gully in two words — What’s yours?’<sup>131</sup> And in his speculations about national characteristics in ‘The Future Australian Race’ he predicts: ‘The present custom of drinking alcohol to excess — favoured alike by dietary scale and by carnivorous practices — will continue.’<sup>132</sup>

In *His Natural Life*, he paints a harrowing and sympathetic portrait of an alcoholic, the Reverend James North.

Twice he passed on his way to the sitting-room, and twice was he driven on by a power stronger than his will. He reached it at length, and opening the cupboard, pulled out what he sought. A bottle of brandy.

With this in his hand, all moderation vanished. He raised it to his lips and eagerly drank. Then, ashamed of what he had done, he thrust the bottle back, and made for his room. Still he could not sleep. The taste of the liquor maddened him for more. He saw in the darkness the brandy bottle, — vulgar and terrible apparition! He saw its amber fluid sparkle, aroma of the spirit. He pictured it standing in the corner of the cupboard, and imagined himself seizing it and quenching the fire that burned within him. He wept, he prayed, he fought with his desire as with a madness. He told himself that another’s life depended on his exertions, that to give way to his fatal passion was unworthy of an educated man and a reasoning being, that it was degrading,



disgusting, and bestial. That, at all times debasing, at this particular time it was infamous; that a vice, unworthy of any man, was doubly sinful in a man of education and a minister of God. In vain. In the midst of his arguments he found himself at the cupboard, with the bottle at his lips, in an attitude that was at once ludicrous and horrible.

He had no cancer. His disaster was a more terrible one. The Reverend James North — gentleman, scholar, and Christian priest — was what the world calls ‘a confirmed drunkard.’<sup>133</sup>

And in a letter to Rose Lewis, his wife’s sister, in the midst of their troubled relationship, Clarke wrote,

You are right. I will not drink brandy to drown out thought. I do drink brandy because it *does* drown thought — not by drunkenness, I never get drunk, but by stimulating the brain to a madness which is strength. It is the practice of a fool, a suicidal practice, for — oh the reaction! I will work instead — though really my ambition has become dead — almost.<sup>134</sup>

Work was the priority. When he did drink, it was for work, or so he claimed. ‘We absorbed wine and women, and hate and love into us, that we might be able to write those magnificent articles,’ he reminisced of the Café de Paris.<sup>135</sup>

Clarke certainly enjoyed a glass or so, as can be testified from his debt for £150 for wines and spirits in his bankruptcy statement.<sup>136</sup> In ‘Marcus Clarke at the Public Library’, Sandra Burt quotes an undated note to Shillinglaw, written at eleven a. m.: ‘For God’s sake come up to the Library and have a drink! If you don’t come in ten minutes I shall calmly perjure myself. p. s. HOT COPPERS.’

Hot coppers was slang for a parched throat after a drinking bout.<sup>137</sup>

In *The Bulletin*, 24 September 1904, Victor Daley recalled being invited by Clarke in the late 1870s for a meal at a Collins Street hotel ‘where pressmen of the first flight used to congregate’:

We took some sherry and bitters to give an appetite for the banquet.

Then he looked at me with amazed blue-grey eyes, and said, ‘I have no money!’

Daley had none either.

‘No dinner!’ he said.

‘We’ll go up and see George Ashton,’ said Clarke.

‘Dire necessity, George!’ Marcus explained.

Mission accomplished, forgetting about dinner, Clarke ordered a bottle of champagne, which was being poured when Ashton passed by.

‘Dire necessity, Marcus?’

‘Dire necessity,’ replied Clarke. ‘Join us.’<sup>138</sup>

The stories of Clarke’s bohemian insouciance have undoubtedly contributed to his reputation as a drinker.<sup>139</sup>

The second issue of *Humbug*, 15 September 1869, the satiric magazine Clarke edited, with some assistance from Henry Kendall, tackled the issue of alcohol. It carried Thomas Carrington’s illustration ‘King Nobbler’, and Kendall’s poem ‘The Demon of Drink’:

Thou art devil and despot to men;  
Thy grip is on wise and on weak –  
On mighty of sword and of pen;  
On those who in council-halls speak.<sup>140</sup>

‘We are a nation of *Drunkards*,’ Clarke declared in his essay ‘The Curse of the Country’: ‘King Nobbler rules over us, and all classes bow

down before him.<sup>141</sup> The sentiments are noble, and no doubt heartfelt.

Every transaction of life, from a birth to a funeral, must be marked by a 'nobbler'; and no man can hope to succeed in business, profession, or society, unless he is prepared to take his chance of death in an asylum for inebriates.

In *The Humbug* for 22 December 1869, Clarke struck closer home with parodies he had written of Kendall, Gordon, George Walstab, himself, and himself again as the Peripatetic Philosopher.<sup>142</sup> Alcohol is a recurrent theme in the parodies of Kendall and Gordon — though not of the Peripatetic Philosopher.

### GLYCERA

by H-N-Y K-ND-LL, ESQ.,

Glycera, my loved one, give me whiskey over proof,  
In the moonless, mild mid-winters, when the rain is on the  
roof.

You that love, and you that listen, black in breaths of stormy  
straits,

Drift with me to death's division, driven by the fierce-eyed  
fates;

This, and this, you have to reckon, when the wind on  
window beats,

And the little schoolboys trembling put their heads beneath  
the sheets;

When from out his chamber leaning, he, the lord of lyre  
and lute,

Sees thee strolling after dinner through deep gardens  
flushed with fruit,

And with all the might of Bacchus, furious from the forest  
fine,

Drains a most tremendous beaker of the worst colonial  
wine ...

'Mark Clancy's Leap by A.L. G-RD-N, ESQ.' similarly inhabits a world of alcoholic haze.

'Come hither, come hither, my little foot-page, and tighten  
the girths for me';  
But never a word said the little foot-page as he louted low  
on his knee;  
For he had drunk of the wine of the foaming Rhine, and  
was very far gone on the spree.

It concludes:

They picked up his body when morning dawned, but there  
wasn't a sign of his soul.  
And the drunken old porter, he said to his daughter, as he  
scratched his obfuscated poll,  
Here's some poor wight has got tight over night, and has  
broken his neck in a hole.

2 June 1870 the Melbourne *Punch* published 'An Australian Poem (Written in the approved style by Our Special Poet)'. The authorship is uncertain, but the target was Kendall. Once again, alcohol is a theme. It is just possible that the author was Kendall himself, indulging in some self-lacerating self-parody. Possible; though Ken Stewart suggests that Clarke is a more likely candidate.

What matter, ye woodlands, what matter,  
At the fall of the nebulous night,  
If a poet can't say who's his hatter  
As he topples home turbulent, tight?

Are we to sit down in the ashes,  
With faces of sorrow and scorn,

Because of the sodas and dashes  
We've mournfully taken at morn?<sup>143</sup>

Agnes Hamilton-Grey, who wrote a number of somewhat hagiographical accounts of Henry Kendall, claimed in *Singer of the Dawn*:

A. Lindsay Gordon has never been written of as having a 'congenital tendency' towards the use of intoxicating liquors; yet he was a very much freer user of the same than Kendall ... Kendall was powerfully influenced by Lindsay Gordon because of the much good in Gordon; but the influence, in the main, was for evil.

She ascribed Kendall's drinking as due to the influence of Gordon, a result of 'the intimacy that led to hours together, and together frequenting the bar-parlour,' and claimed, in defiance of all the evidence, 'Kendall, before that time, could not be accused of even a tendency to the undue use of intoxicating liquors.'<sup>144</sup> Kendall's son, Frederick, responded in exasperation in a letter to J.K. Moir, 4 August 1938: 'This egregious woman ... she even tried to make out that his illustrious friend A.L.G. had taught him to drink! You can see it if you bother to look at her book. Of course *it was in his family*.'<sup>145</sup>

There is no doubt that Kendall often drank, and had done so before he met Gordon, and that is was in his family. 'A legacy of liquor, confirmed over generations, would prove to be inescapable,' Michael Ackland writes in *Henry Kendall: The Man and the Myths*.<sup>146</sup> Kendall left Sydney for Melbourne in April 1869, partly to avoid problems caused by his mother's alcoholism. But without any assured, regular income, and dependent on freelance work, he began sinking into poverty and desperation. In *The Development of Australian Literature* Alexander Sutherland writes:

He grew more and more unsteady, became less capable of work, and drifted rapidly into squalor. The wretched family

hid their heads in a dingy lane of Richmond, while the poet, whose soul but five years earlier had been aglow with high ideals, and a love for all that is beautiful and mysterious in nature, spent his evenings in obscure public-houses, and his nights too often seated in some lane or right-of-way. Eight years later, when the fierce, foul dream of this time had spent its force, and given place to a long, slow remorseful time of quietness, he wrote of himself:

Have I no word at all for him  
Who used down fetid lanes to slink,  
And squat in tap-room corners grim,  
And drown his thoughts in dregs of drink?<sup>147</sup>

And Kendall wrote further in 'On a Street':

Ah, song, be silent! Show no more  
The lady in the perished dress,  
The scholar on the tap-room floor.

In 'Henry Kendall's Haggard Street,' *Adam and Eve*, 3 May 1927, M.P. Sweeney wrote of this period:

One of Kendall's truest friends was the late Mr Hartkopf, father of the present-day cricketer. He was a fine German literary scholar, and gave Kendall the first English translation of Goethe's 'Watermill' — a poem afterwards made famous by the late Mel B. Spurr in all parts of the Empire. Kendall never went home from Hartkopf's old-fashioned wine tavern, with its barrels and rude forms, without a bottle of stern port to warm a chilly, cheerless night. Standing in those days in Brunswick Street, opposite each other, and a few hundred yards from Kendall's home,

were two hotels. They were the Labor in Vain and The Perseverance. The Labor in Vain was kept by a big Irishman, who used to quote Tom Moore to Kendall on both ordinary and extraordinary occasions.

Kendall returned to Sydney in October 1870. 25 November, he was committed for trial for forging and uttering a cheque. He was found not guilty on the ground of temporary insanity. 5 July 1871, he was admitted to Gladesville Hospital for the Insane for three and a half weeks: 'His habits are intemperate and he frequently takes opium and sedatives in large quantities ...' 30 April 1873 he was readmitted, this time for two months: 'Form of mental disorder ... mania. Supposed cause ... intemperance.' The report stated:

His hair has been cut owing to its dirty condition. He is extremely nervous and in a depressed condition of mind and body. He is fairly rational but there is a jerkiness of manner and a changefulness of thought which is not wholesome. He is sleepless by night and morbid and melancholy by day. He is very emaciated and pale. The secretions are in good order, the appetite is good and he has apparently started on the road to recovery.<sup>148</sup>

In letters now in Mitchell Library Kendall wrote to Philip Holdsworth about this period, 5 March 1876: 'I was almost dead in the bitter hospitals of Sydney'; and to J. Sheridan Moore, 17 May 1876: 'I recollect very little of my subsequent Sydney life for my mind was unhinged nearly all the time.'<sup>149</sup> J. Henniker Heaton recorded of Kendall in his *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time*: 'Overwork unfortunately led him into intemperate habits, but in 1874 he entirely recovered his former excellent reputation.'<sup>150</sup> In *The Development of Australian Literature* Sutherland continues the story:

Kendall received the appointment of a newspaper at

Grafton, a town where he was well known and valued. The steamer he sailed in called for a few hours at Newcastle by the way. Kendall was one of the passengers who went ashore, but not one of those who returned on board.<sup>151</sup>

After drinking away whatever money he had, Kendall set out to walk back to Sydney. Reaching Gosford, he was befriended by the Fagan family, who helped restore him to health, and employed him in their timber business.<sup>152</sup> 23 October 1874 Kendall wrote to J. Sheridan Moore: 'I have taken nothing stronger than tea for the last eleven months.'<sup>153</sup> A.G. Stephens' *Bulletin* diary, however, records some lapses from sobriety:

Holdsworth told several Kendall anecdotes: Once Holdsworth called to see Kendall at house of P.F. Fagan in Sydney ... Found him in charge of servant — practical prisoner. Kendall wanted 1/-. Holdsworth gave him 2/6. Kendall eluded servant, Holdsworth followed him to three pubs — a drink in each — brought him home 'absolutely flaccid'.

Again, at Camden Haven, NSW — riding party. Kendall went forward on some errand — two or three miles further on Fagan stopped party (which included Mrs Kendall): 'I'll go forward and shift that log out of the way.' The log was Kendall, who had imbibed freely of roadside rum.<sup>154</sup>

Kendall's son Frederick recalled in *Henry Kendall: His Later Years*:

Even in his final and happiest years, the black moods of retrospection would envelop him, strangely enough after an evening of animated and humanly merry conversation, as if he thought himself guilty of forgetfulness ... At such times he would seek the delusive consolation of alcohol.



His best friends and his dearest ones were then open to misunderstanding and even unjust accusation, though all did their best to humour and soothe him. He was not, like some other poets, a hearty, unashamed Bacchanalian, but became for a time, in turns, querulous, sentimental, suspicious, and even insulting. The trouble was not that he drank much but that he was physically unfitted to drink at all. In fact he might have been considered temperate, in a quantitative sense, compared with other public men of those days.<sup>155</sup>

‘I have not been in a city since August 1875,’ Kendall wrote to N. Walter Swan, 10 February 1880, in a letter now in the National Library of Australia: ‘After a day’s work, I frequently feel terribly depressed; and such things as spirits, laudanum, chlorodyne, etc. have necessarily to be kept out of my way. This, you will admit, is exceedingly sad.’<sup>156</sup>

2 August 1881, Marcus Clarke died, aged thirty-five. Hamilton Mackinnon records: ‘The illness which immediately caused his decease, commenced with an attack of pleurisy, and this developing into congestion of the liver, and finally into erysipelas, carried him off in the space of one short week. Indeed he had, during the last year of his life, suffered so frequently from attacks brought on by a disordered liver, that little heed was given to the final attack till a day or two previous to his death.’<sup>157</sup> A day short of a year later, 1 August 1882, Henry Kendall died, aged forty-three. He was suffering from tuberculosis, which killed his father, brother and one sister.<sup>158</sup> A.G. Stephens recorded an account of the funeral from Victor Daley: ‘Fifteen vehicles followed Kendall’s hearse. Daley and Richmond Thatcher walked — drank at every pub on the way. “Ah,” said Thatcher, “this is what poor Kendall would enjoy if he could look back and see us.”’<sup>159</sup>

Stephens recalled in *The Bulletin*, 16 July 1930, that in December 1886 a monument was erected over Kendall’s grave,

with the closing lines of Shelley’s lamenting poem for Keats

inscribed: –

‘Surely he takes his fill

‘Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill’.

Kendall’s convivial habits were still strongly remembered by the public mind, and Dalley suggested a doubt that the reference to ‘liquid rest’ was perhaps a little too appropriate.<sup>160</sup>

Though according to Frederick Kendall in the introduction to his father’s *Poems* the inscription was ‘the graceful suggestion of the late W.B. Dalley, an old friend.’<sup>161</sup>

In 1945 the United Licensed Victuallers’ Association erected a plaque at the Marine Hotel, Brighton: ‘Adam Lindsay Gordon Poet and Horseman tethered his horse to this hitching post during his residence in Brighton 1869–70.’

Both memorials perpetuate the belief that poets drink. Indeed they do; and quite often they drink anything. But the historical evidence suggests that while Kendall had his periods of excess, Gordon and Clarke were generally moderate and restrained in their consumption of alcohol.

# Marcus Clarke in the Colonial City: The Journalism

The wide range of Marcus Clarke's interests worked against the endurance of his reputation. Critics and historians of literature are often suspicious of someone who works in several areas. And Clarke was not only a novelist, but a short story writer, an historian and myth-maker in his *Old Tales of a Young Country*, an antiquarian and scholar in his *Notes and Queries* contributions and in his Melbourne Public Library work, a poet, a dramatist, a political controversialist, a reviewer and critic, and a journalist. His journalism is as important a side of his work as any of his other activities, and in itself as various in its scope. The most accessible selection of it is in *A Colonial City: High and Low Life – Selected Journalism of Marcus Clarke* edited by L.T. Hergenhahn, who did a marvellous job in rescuing the material from oblivion, in reprinting both the known pieces and the multitude of unsigned pieces that Clarke wrote for the press over a period of fifteen years.<sup>162</sup>

The only journalism Clarke collected into book form was *The Peripatetic Philosopher* (1869), a selection of his column of that name contributed to *The Australasian*, which was published while the column was still in mid-career. *The Peripatetic Philosopher* has never been reprinted, but Hergenhahn valuably provides substantial selections from the whole course of the column which ran from 23 November 1867 to 11 June 1870. Page references that follow are to *A Colonial City*. The topics are the standard perennials for the humorous, occasionally controversial, diverting

column. 'Holiday-making, as a general rule, is the hardest work attempted by mankind, and the most weary, flat, stale and unprofitable business into the bargain.' (20) The predictable paradox, the literary reference are the staple material. The persona Clarke adopted was that of the cynical, world-weary, none too successful man of the world riding out yet another storm — and the storms are eerily predictive of those that finally destroyed him. 'Circumstances over which I had no control — to wit, bailiffs — compelled me to wander in Fitzroy Gardens last Sunday evening.' (26) 'A merry Christmas! Very merry with the bailiffs drinking beer in the kitchen, and James George Augustus Robinson (*aetat*, 1 hour 37 min.) reposing stertorously upon the flock-bed in the dismantled room upstairs! A very merry Christmas, with the roast beef in a violent perspiration, and the thermometer 110 deg. in the shade!' (28)

The Melbourne *Punch* attacked Clarke in three separate sketches for the Philosopher's affected knowledge of Parisian experience and French literature, for the world-weary, cynical pose, for arrogance, affected misanthropy and so on.<sup>163</sup> Clarke replied, *Australasian*, 30 January 1869:

I have been accused of egotism.

I beg respectfully to intimate that this is a free country. If I like to be egotistical, I will be egotistical, and I maintain that I have a perfect right to be so ... I have never met any human creature of the male sex whom I liked and admired half so much as I like and admire myself. *You* may call this egotism; *I* call it proper self-respect. (53)

Nineteenth-century journalistic humour does not always transplant readily from its original context. And yet, amongst the undemanding, amusing triviality, Clarke comes up with some nice observations. The unpromising topic 'On Bowing', *Australasian*, 15 August 1868, offers this:

But of all bows the backward jerk is the most objectionable.  
This method is purely colonial, and is a happy compound

of the university don bow and the fast lawyer's clerk's airy manner. It consists in grinning superciliously, and then jerking the head back over the off ear, as if to avoid a tap on the chin. The instant the bowee recognizes you, you resume your usual wooden expression, and look as if you had never seen him before. This is much affected by our rising colonial youth, and is, in my mind, one of the strongest provocations to kicking a man that I know of; indeed, when accompanied by a *nonchalant* swing of a three-penny cane, it is irresistible. (32)

Amongst the early, original sources and models for the weekly columnist were the *Spectator* essays of Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, and Charles's Lamb's *Essays of Elia*. Lamb's Elia essay 'Distant Correspondents' was a letter to Barron Field in Sydney in 1823. It opened:

My dear F. — When I think how welcome the sight of a letter from the world where you were born must be to you in that strange one to which you have been transplanted, I feel some compunctious visitings at my long silence.

And Lamb continued with a sustained tone of supercilious condescension at the absurdity of someone living in the antipodes, transplanted even if not transported. The Peripatetic Philosopher turns the tables on Lamb in 'Letters from Home', *Australasian*, 28 November 1868, and while working within the facetious tradition of Elia, confronts that English superiority to the colonists by bluntly expressing the expatriate's lack of interest in whatever might have been happening in the motherland. Clarke opens:

More mails, more weariness of letters, more delirium of telegrams, more recklessness of unamusing correspondence! All is emphatically vanity, and essential oil of vexation of

spirit. Why do people write letters? Why do friends in England force themselves to scribble the intelligence that little Tommy has got well over the measles, that John has gone through the Insolvency Court, or that Clara has run away with a penniless lieutenant of marines? After three or four years we care not for Tommy's ailments nor John's difficulties, and cherish recollections of Clara only as she appeared in short frocks and pantalettes. We wade through a mass of correspondence only to light our melancholy pipe with the last sheet, and regretfully think of the bother of replying. (50)

Expatriation is inevitably a theme of Clarke's writing — not only because it was a part of his own personal experience, but also because it was a large part of the texture of colonial life. And Clarke's commitment is to that colonial life. His journalism expresses no regrets at being away from 'Home', nor any wish to return there.

The 'return of the exile' is all humbug. Poets may write as they will about the 'sacred joy' of clasping relatives in one's arms, but those who have tried the process have experienced a totally different feeling. (52)

Clarke's base is Australia and he writes as someone committed to be there — not as a visitor or tourist or unwilling exile, not as the stock figure come out to make a fortune to be able to return 'Home' and buy back the family estate. There was, of course, no likelihood of Clarke's ever making a fortune. But that was because he was enjoying the life he was leading — immersed in it as the real experience for him, not perched on the sidelines waiting to go back to some mythical reality at 'Home'. His reflections on 'New Chums', *Australasian*, 10 October 1868, and 23 January 1869, is an amused look at the varieties of young men come out to make their fortunes — at those who leave straightaway, and at those

who vanish. In the former category is Guy de Vere,

a young man who has been liberally educated, has fagged at Eton and been plucked at Oxford. He is tolerably wealthy and travels about for amusement, which he never obtains ...

Poor Guy de Vere! He was disappointed in the colony, and went home. He said that he expected to find Collins-street blazing with beauty and fashion, and crowded with carriages. He walked down it *once* I believe, and then retired to his club, where he read a novel (upside down) until dinner-time. On leaving for England, he remarked that Melbourne was not the place for an idle man, and that he should never again come farther south than the Mediterranean. (41)

And then there is the second category of young men in 'stupendous collars and widely improbable trousers disporting themselves about town':

I find that they begin life at Port Phillip or Scott's: that they play billiards frequently, and abuse the colony with immense gusto. For the first fortnight they cannot go into a bar for a glass of beer without producing a sovereign to pay for it, and, even when they receive change, will frequently plunge their hands into their trouser pocket, and produce a mingled handful of silver, gold, and notes therefrom. They patronise the theatres, and inquire anxiously about private boxes for the season. They stroll down to a livery stable and ask if 'they have got any decent cattle, you know'. (42-4)

And then the money runs out and they vanish and 'the question is never satisfactorily answered, and I ask in vain — What becomes of all these young men?' (44)

These young men were all part of the texture of Melbourne life and Clarke treats them with tolerant amusement. He is secure enough in his

own commitment to Australia not to have angrily to reject the old country, or to respond touchily to British arrogance. The royal visit of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh provided him with some happy absurdities for his earliest columns. In particular he noted the equerry's distress at the Australian accent, *Australasian*, 11 January 1868: 'The unpleasant method of pronunciation must have jarred terribly upon his sensitive nerves. It was probably while under the influence of mental prostration produced by this constant irritation that the critical equerry wrote the following ...' (13) and he quotes one of the equerry's pronouncements, a masterpiece of grammatical confusion.

Clarke's tolerance, however, did not extend to Anthony Trollope's rapidly researched articles on Australia, appearing in the London *Daily Telegraph* in 1872. Clarke complained of what he perceived as the superficialities of the work of 'Mr Cackleby Twaddle', the 'eminent English author, well known to the trade', in one of his articles in 'The Buncle Correspondence', 13 April 1872, a series Clarke contributed to *The Argus* on and off from December 1871 to October 1873. Then as now Australia was victim to the in-depth travel book of what Clarke summarizes as the '*Ten Minutes in Timbuctoo; Luncheon at Luxor; Popping Round the Pyramids, with a Peep at the Palaces of Palmyra*, by "A Schoolboy"' variety (295).<sup>164</sup>

That there is a national life, I believe, and when Mr Bret Harte comes out here he will, perhaps, describe it. I certainly do not think ... that a gentleman who has spent his life in studying the foibles of old ladies, and comparing the peculiarities of bishops, is the most fitted to comprehend us. (297)

Clarke had enthusiastically reviewed Bret Harte's *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in the *Australian Journal*, March 1871. He read and admired many of the American writers. In his journalism he mentions Melville, Twain, Whitman, Poe, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Oliver Wendell



Holmes, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Fennimore Cooper, Washington Irving, Artemus Ward and John Hay. As L.T. Hergenhahn stressed 'the American influence as well as the English must not be underrated. Clarke and others were keeping up with journals like the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *North American Review*; *The Australasian* was reviewing a high proportion of American literature and reviewing it well; and Bret Harte, at least, was serialized in Australia.'<sup>165</sup> The American writers provided Clarke with precedents for the establishment of a new and vital literature, independent of European models. 25 May 1872, in the second of the 'Noah's Ark' Dialogues he contributed to *The Australasian* from 18 May 1872 to 13 September 1873, he discusses American literature. He has Kyfax say

You persistently refuse to understand the literature of democracy. We are tired of *formulae*; we demand something which is to be expressive of the life of the century — with its steam-engines, and divorce courts, and gold mines, and revolving pistols, and social science, and electric telegraphs, and spiritualists, and freethinkers, and — (249)

Looking for ways and signs for establishing the new, Clarke does not reject the old out of hand. No more than negatively rejecting England does he reject the achievements of English writers. His obituary on Dickens in *The Argus*, 18 July 1870, carefully delineates the areas of Dickens's achievement that Clarke admired — and the areas for which he turned to other mentors.

Dickens is to literature what Hogarth is to art. He is essentially the man of the people, and he expresses better than any other writer of his time the thoughts, feelings and sentiments of the average *bourgeois*. Born and reared in the 'middle class', his books are the reflex of the practical English life of the 19th century, and the secret of his fame

lies in the fact that he painted men and manners, not as they should be, but as they are. His romance was the romance of reality, and the ordinary mind, wearied with high-flown sentiment, sick of the 'love of angels' and heroes, turned to Dickens to find the poetry of 'those things which lie close about our feet,' and to wonder that it never found it before. When we read Thackeray, or his master, Balzac, we exclaim — 'What satirists; how deep they go beneath the surface!' When we read Dickens, we say — 'How simple; *I wonder I never thought of that before!*' Herein is the charm of those characters which are as household words to us. They do not speak the sentiments of gods or fiends. They are but human beings; but they are *so* human. Dickens was the chief realist of modern literature. He detested the heroic, and when he attempted it, failed. (228)

The similarities of some of this to Dr Johnson's assessment of Shakespeare should not make us doubt its sincerity. Clarke is often Johnsonian, in shared attitudes, in tone, and in acknowledged and unacknowledged quotation. Clarke admires — as Johnson did of Shakespeare — the representative realism of Dickens. And he admires that because it had been a breakthrough for English fiction, a new way of looking at social conditions. Once again Clarke is searching for the appropriate form to give expression to new materials, for the foundation of an Australian writing. Barry Argyle claimed in *An Introduction to the Australian Novel 1830–1930*<sup>166</sup> that Byron and Scott were the major literary influences on emerging Australian fiction: 'Scott provided the pattern for adventure — the result of two societies in conflict — and the scenery. Byron provided the typical heroes, who admitted no social allegiance.' But his thesis is significantly qualified by Clarke's comments on Scott here.

The Northern Wizard had cast the magic of his spells

on tower and ruin, forest, moor, and fell. The knights had arisen and clanked in their stately armour through folios of commonplace; while distressed damsels and lovelorn squires outraged propriety with all the ease of fiction. The spread of education among the poorer classes had produced a desire for 'something to read.' Shakespeare had, in a like epoch, responded to a like call by giving novels which were played, not read. Since his day the people had grown more exacting. A play was soon over; they wanted to eat their cake a little slower. Unable to comprehend the romances of a bygone age, unskilled in the mysteries of old clothes, and not knowing a demi-culverin from an arquebus, the great London 'public' recoiled before the medieval romance. They wanted something real. Something about themselves. Something which would be to them as Tom Jones, and Colonel Jack, and Moll Flanders, had been to their grandfathers. The great Sir Walter had charmed all Scotland and half England, but the remaining half did not understand Scotch. They wanted something near home. (229)

Clarke acknowledged Scott's immense influence — and sympathized with the resistance to it. Instead of the romance of medievalism he espoused the romance of reality — that same phrase that he applied to Dickens he had earlier applied to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in one of his 'Lower Bohemia' papers on Melbourne's down and outs.<sup>167</sup> It was this 'romance of reality' that Clarke sought in his own writing — in his journalism when he explored the lives of the derelict, in his *Old Tales of a Young Country* when he set out to establish the realistic history of convictism, and of course in *His Natural Life* where his researches, documented in an appendix, established the hideous reality of that romance.

In writing about Dickens as about Bret Harte, Clarke is working

out his literary preoccupations. If Scott was so important an influence on Australian writing, then the considered rejection of Scott here is an important stage in clearing the ground for the new national literature. And on the positive note, what Clarke admired in Dickens was what he admired in Bret Harte. 'Before Sam Weller was born into print the Cockney was ignorant of half his own heritage of humour.' (230) The impetus behind Clarke's writing was to make the Australians aware of their heritage of story, of myth, of the romance of reality.

The other great literary source for Clarke's world picture and writing was the work of the French novelists. They are alluded to in his 'Lower Bohemia' series and elsewhere in his journalism, constant touchstones which he defends from the attacks of English puritanical philistinism in the first of 'The Buncle Correspondence' series, 'Of French Novels' *Argus*, 2 February 1872. He deals in particular with Alexandre Dumas *père* and *fils*, Eugene Sue, Paul de Kock, J.X.B. Saintine, Victor Hugo, and, finally with Balzac.

But my pen runs away with me: what space have I left in which to descant upon immortal Balzac? Balzac the prince of novel writers. Balzac the father of Thackeray, the foster-father of Sala, the forerunner of Dickens in descriptive minuteness, the ancestor of Trollope in feminine analysis, the guide of Charles Reade, the philosopher of Dutton Cook, I may almost say the *friend* of the authoress of *Adam Bede*. (291)

Clarke had already declared his enthusiasm for Balzac in one of his earliest essays, 'Balzac and Modern French Literature' in *The Australasian*, 3 August 1867. Much of it is taken up in countering the puritan resistance of Anglo-Saxon readers:

the 'delicate-handed *dilettante*' readers who shudder at the impurities of the French press, would be astonished if they

knew how much their own contemporary literature owes to it ... the works of Honoré de Balzac form the ground-plan of modern realistic literature. No Frenchman, save perhaps Rabelais and Montaigne, has done more for English literature, and no man has been worse treated.<sup>168</sup>

Once again it is the pioneering, revolutionary aspect of the writer that appeals to Clarke, the way Balzac created a new literature. 'Balzac was born when the world was tired of conventionalities — when the attempt to paint life as a bed of roses had failed.' 'Balzac was the type of the bold thinkers of the day. His genius was revolutionary. He wishes not to improve upon the old models, but to set up fresh ones.'<sup>169</sup> There was an element of identification in Clarke's enthusiasm for Balzac. Certainly much of what he wrote of him, others were to write similarly of Clarke.

In his own person he was the incarnation of Parisian Bohemianism. Shrewd, observant, careless, generous, and defiant, he was the very man to grasp the anomalous life of the Parisian of the day ... To depict the ever-shifting scenes in that huge kaleidoscope was the task Balzac attempted, and it was no easy one. The indomitable industry of the man conquered at last. But the struggle for fame and bread killed him. The pages of his finest works are written with his life-blood. To the easy-going *dilettante* author who thinks to step into fame and name without an effort, the life of Balzac will seem terrible. It was one long struggle with debt and difficulty ...

Having experienced the evils of poverty, he was now constantly engaged in preposterous schemes for the rapid accumulation of wealth. His works teem with descriptions of the miseries of poverty. Balzac-like he made his sufferings productive ... It seemed as though debt would never leave him. The establishment of various papers, all edited with

ability, only served to impoverish him.<sup>170</sup>

The spirit of Balzac lies behind Clarke's portrayal both of Melbourne Bohemia and the Melbourne bourgeoisie. He presents the Melbourne Bohemian world that he knew so well as a version of the Parisian world that Balzac described. Clarke continually recurred to 'literary Bohemia' (54) — the phrase is from the Peripatetic Philosopher's reply to his critics, *Australasian*, 30 January 1869. One of his earliest pieces, 'Austin Friars' in the *Australian Monthly Magazine*, May 1866, describes his first months in Melbourne. In part it is an exploration of the 'New Chums' theme, a study in immigration and acclimatization. But the acclimatization Clarke sought and achieved was not with up-country sheep stations (he tried that from 1865–67) but with the journalistic, literary, theatrical world of Melbourne, the late nights of drinking, eating, talking, restaurants, cafés, theatres; and the concomitant days of poverty, disaster, hopes.

You, my friend, Smellfungus, may think me a vulgar, degraded brute, and you, O Luscher Demas, a brand not yet snatched from the burning; but then *you* have never tried Bohemianism; you have never lived like a Prince of the Blood one day, and subsisted on a pipe and a pint of beer the next; you have never lived in an atmosphere of wit, poverty, luxury, champagne, tripe, tobacco, billiards, pawn tickets, the drama, the gutter, beef and cabbage, oysters and Chablis, lavender gloves and coats out at elbows, Barrett's twist one day, and Regalias, at a shilling apiece, the next; you have never gone to the pit of the Haymarket with an 'actor's order' on Monday, and on Tuesday to a private box at the Royal, with a champagne supper to follow; in a word you have never lived at 'Austin Friars!' You, O respectable Smellfungus — and you, O reverend Demas, have never done this! You would, doubtless, blush with respectable shame if you had done so, and you are therefore ignorant how easily good spirits, a good digestion, and jolly companions enable

a man to triumph over all the ills that flesh is heir to. You cannot know what a fund of humour there is in common life, and how ridiculous one's shifts and strugglings appear when viewed through Bohemian glass. (99)

'Austin Friars' is about Clarke's earliest days in Melbourne. With his entering journalism in 1867 he moved into a further circle of Bohemia, and he looks back on that in a reminiscence of the Theatre Royal's Café de Paris, 'The Café Lutetia', in the *Weekly Times*, 28 February 1874:

The whirligig of Time has a right to bring in his revenges, and one must not expect to be for ever young and prodigal, and careless of the morrow. Savage is now a most virtuous person, with a wife, and when I go to see him he reads me lectures upon domestic duty. Time has turned the old days to derision, as Swinburne sings, and I am ashamed to confess that I once carved the goose at the Christmas dinner of Kitty East. Yet I am surely no morally better than in the Café time. I am, I fear, morally worse, for I have now no enjoyment in being robbed, and to give a man a cloak who takes a coat is the essence of Christian charity. Yet why regret our experiences? As well be fooling with Mogador or Champ-fleury as wasting reputation upon Pauline or sentiment upon Foedora. Life is too short for idealities. The Café Lutetia was a part of our existence. Its reveries, its follies, went to make up our life; we loved, and fought, and sighed, and drank in order that we might grow (O, my dear old Savage) to be the great creatures that we are. We absorbed wine and women, and hate and love into us, that we might be able to write those magnificent articles for the *Peacock* and the *Screechowl* (340).<sup>171</sup>

It was all for the sake of the writing. The writing was always there as

the good reason for those nights of conviviality.

Hergenhan identifies 'Savage' as the journalist Alfred Telo, and Clarke's obituary on Telo in the *Leader*, 11 October 1879, recalls the same period of Clarke's life. The choice of 'Savage' as a name is yet another of Clarke's Johnsonian allusions, recalling Johnson's memoir (1744) of his friend Savage's career of irresponsibility, desperation, bohemianism and disaster. But it alludes also to Charles Whitehead, who wrote a novel *Richard Savage* (1841) before coming to Australia in 1857 and dying in poverty in the Immigrant's Home the year before Clarke arrived.<sup>172</sup> In London Whitehead had been asked to write the text to accompany a series of sporting illustrations. He declined the commission and suggested instead an unknown young journalist, Charles Dickens, who accepted, and produced *The Pickwick Papers*.

'The Café Lutetia' appeared in 'The Wicked World' series that Clarke wrote for the *Weekly Times* in 1874. Here he is at his most Balzacian, writing a Comédie Humaine of Melbourne life. He ranges across the whole moneyed society — doctors, lawyers, stockbrokers, speculators, the theatre, the Bohemian world. He looks at his characters in all their pretensions and dishonesties, he describes their manner and their habitat, their expensive hotels and their suburban homes. 'The Brief Experience of Mr Thomas Twopenny', 14 March 1874, and 'Taking a Drink', 21 March 1874,<sup>173</sup> both deal with sexual imbroglios — adulteries and desertions — with a remarkable openness. (346–55) Whether Clarke had a new freedom because of the *Weekly Times's* management, or because his reputation was high at this time, is unclear. But the series had a worldly sophistication, more adult and less coy, that complemented the satirically acute sociological observations to present a rich portrait of 'Fawkner's town'.

'Nasturtium Villas', 14 February 1874, is a fine description of dining with the moneyed bourgeoisie, eating excessively and indiscriminately in a house stuffed full of a medley of expensive artefacts and artworks. Clarke records the detail of menu and decorations and the style of conversation, and he concludes:



Here was a whole family — a whole tribe of human beings — whose only notion of their part in life was to obtain as much money as they could by any legal means scrape together, and spend it upon eating, drinking, and decoration of their persons. They have no aspirations and few ideas. They do not read, write, or sustain one ambition which a few bank notes cannot satisfy. Deprive them of their bank-balance, and they have no resources of consolation. Place them in any place where chaffering and huckstering are not the business of life, and they would starve. And yet — how kind is Nature! — they imagine themselves to be the salt of the earth — the only fortunate people worthy to be beloved by God and man. (331)

In *Humbug*, 27 October 1869, the humorous magazine he edited that ran for nineteen issues from September 1869 to January 1870, Clarke compared the inadequate funds available for the Immigrants' Home and Benevolent Asylum with the price of the two-guinea ticket for the retiring Mayor of Melbourne's Testimonial Ball:

It has been found that both are 'overcrowded', and that the former institution has been compelled to refuse assistance to applicants because it had exhausted both finances and accommodation. Yet, while Melbourne Society and the Melbourne Corporation are feasting and dancing, the Melbourne poor are turned away from their only refuge because Society and the Corporation 'cannot afford to pay for more accommodation'. (206)

The realities of the poverty of Bohemia were painful enough, as Clarke's two bankruptcies showed. But however disastrous things in that world could be, there was always hope — there was always the possibility of writing another play, another piece of journalism. It was a Bohemia

of irresponsibility, but the irresponsible had talents that they could hire out or cash in. There was another Bohemia, however, where the poverty had little mitigation, where there was no hope of change. This was the world that Clarke wrote about in his six 'Lower Bohemia' sketches in *The Australasian* in 1869. And here Mayhew and Dickens supplement Balzac as his literary models. The first piece, 'A Night at the Immigrants' Home', *Australasian* 12 June 1869, opens:

The kingdom of Bohemia is divided into two parts. There is Upper Bohemia, the land of Béranger and Paul de Kock; the land where M. Fichclaque lived, and where Rose and Uralie and Fanfan, and other pretty flowers of a prurient sentimentality flourished and bloomed. This is the country where Rose Pompon sang and danced, and where poor Béranger's mistress hung her shawl across the window; the land which borders on Tattyboy's rents, and in which Mr Polyblank disports himself. This is the land of sweet wickedness and unlawful delights; the land where Hugo's Fanchette was born — the City of Refuge, whose praises are sung by a host of poets. This is Upper Bohemia — the land of freedom, and wit, and pleasure; sparkling with supper parties, and radiant with beauty. But there is another Bohemia — very different to this; a Bohemia whose inhabitants are Bohemian indeed; where there are few suppers and no supper parties, where no songs are sung and no wine cups circulate, where vice is vice without the tinsel, and vagabondage is stripped of its poetry. This is the real Bohemia; the other is but a fictitious and impossible place, which exists but in the dreams of the poet or the imagination of the romance writer. (132)

Clarke's articles on Lower Bohemia are in the best tradition of exposé journalism. He describes a night at a doss house, 'the Immigrants'

Home'; he describes a night at 'A Cheap Lodging House', 31 July 1869; and, in 'In Outer Darkness', 21 August 1869, he describes the plight of 'the absolutely homeless' (169) who sleep out in ramshackle hovels, improvised tents, or utterly without covering, on the banks of the Yarra.

At intervals of the ascent an object gleams in the ghastly phosphorescent glare of the clouded night behind some boulder or stone-heap, into which it seems to melt and amalgamate. This object is a man sleeping. Every now and then we come to a dip or hollow in the ground, which is full of vagabond humanity crouching on leese of tempest. Round the back of the Home, and up inside the dismal railings that skirt the horse-ride by the St. Kilda-road, is more Bohemianism. It lies under bushes, by the side of rotten palings, and in the gully by the fence. It is covered with tattered blankets, with rags, with coat turned up over head, with thickness of pasted advertisements torn down from the mouldering paling-boards, with cut-down and plucked-up bushes — with nothing. Here are the dwellers in the wilderness, huddled together indiscriminately — men, women, children. (172)

The 'Lower Bohemia' series is Clarke's most sustained exploration of this milieu. But his earlier three part series in *The Argus*, 'Night Scenes in Melbourne' had dealt with related areas: 'Melbourne Streets at Midnight', 28 February 1868, 'A Pawnbroker's Shop on a Saturday Night', 6 March, and 'The Chinese Quarter', 9 March 1868. (100–25)

'Lower Bohemia' was a world that most Melburnians did not even know existed, let alone experienced. It was a far cry from the carefree literary Bohemia of Clarke's milieu. But his insistence that this other was the real Bohemia suggests that he was writing for himself as much as for his audience, opening his own eyes to his own possible fate. Charles Whitehead, that earlier literary expatriate, author of *Richard Savage* and

one-time friend of Charles Dickens, had ended up in the Immigrants' Home and died in dire poverty. Clarke would have known of him, for Clarke's fellow member of the Yorick Club, J.E. Neild, had tried to look after Whitehead in his last year.

## **‘A National School of Australian Poetry’ and Marcus Clarke’s Essential Recycling**

Marcus Clarke’s Preface to the reissue of Adam Lindsay Gordon’s poems in 1876 is one of the classic texts of Australian literature with its proclamation of ‘something very like the beginnings of a national school of Australian poetry’, its characterisation of ‘the dominant note of Australian scenery’ as ‘Weird Melancholy’, and its vivid evocation of the landscape of the Australian bush.<sup>174</sup> Samuel R. Simmons was the first to point out that Clarke was recycling material written earlier.<sup>175</sup> Passages of the Preface had originally been written to accompany reproductions of Nicholas Chevalier’s ‘The Buffalo Ranges’ and Louis Buvelôt’s ‘Waterpool near Coleraine’ in *Pictures in the National Gallery Melbourne*, issued in twelve monthly parts from October 1873 to September 1874, and published the following year as a book, *Photographs of the Pictures in the National Gallery Melbourne*.<sup>176</sup> In ‘Marcus Clarke and the Colonial Landscape’<sup>177</sup> L.T. Hergenhahn examined the two original texts that Clarke recycled. He reprinted them in his selection of Clarke’s journalism, *A Colonial City*, noting minor textual variations from the Preface. Page references given here in parentheses are to that selection.<sup>178</sup>

This was not the only recycling Clarke practised. The same material was also used in a hitherto unremarked essay Clarke contributed to the *Brisbane Courier* and its weekly companion *The Queenslander*. The Preface to Gordon’s poems is one of his best known pieces. But its source in the

*Brisbane Courier* and *The Queenslander* offers Clarke's fullest response to the emerging literature of Australia in which he gives the most substantial and extensive appreciation of his poetic contemporaries that he ever wrote. And these contemporaries he discusses were all members of the Yorick Club and amongst his closest friends: Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Kendall, George Gordon McCrae and Dr Patrick Moloney. Plus some briefer notice of 'Australis', Charles Harpur and Brunton Stephens.

Clarke was adept at recycling. Partly this was a freelance writer's strategy, maximising the income from each piece written. But it was also a way to maximise exposure, when the material initially appeared in a narrowly localized publication. The state capitals and regional centres all had their own newspapers — the Melbourne *Argus*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Brisbane Courier*, the Adelaide *Advertiser* and *Register*, the Hobart *Mercury* and so on — but their circulations were restricted to individual cities. To gain national exposure required other strategies. Henry Kendall published his poems in multiple venues, often years apart and in variant texts — from *The Empire* and *Sydney Morning Herald* to the *Clarence and Richmond Examiner* and *New England Advertiser* and *The Australasian*.

But as well as some strategic reprinting, Clarke developed a habit of recycling. It was a way of assembling new material from pre-existent blocks — a different way of construction from Romantic assumptions of spontaneity and organic coherence. He adeptly cut and pasted documentary material into his novels *His Natural Life* and *Chidiack Tichbourne*. He collected previously published stories into *Four Stories High* and created a sort of *Decameron* or *Canterbury Tales* by writing new introductory and connective material that made the initially individual pieces into something like a whole.<sup>179</sup>

*The Argus* reviewer of Clarke's first book of stories, *Holiday Peak and Other Tales*<sup>180</sup> complained, 26 May 1873:

'Holiday Peak,' we believe, appears now for the first time,  
but the other tales have been published before, either in

*The Australasian* or some other periodical. We submit that there is a nice ethical question involved in this modern system of making up books out of a quantity of second-hand material. In the case under notice, we have one paper with which the reader makes acquaintance for the first time. It occupies some 16 pages out of 84, and it must be admitted that the novelty bears a very small proportion to the old matter. People who buy the book will be caught by the name of the short new story, little dreaming probably that they are already acquainted with the greater part of the remaining contents. Mr Clarke, no doubt, can plead custom as his excuse for this mild deception on the public, but we cannot avoid the conclusion that anything calculated to mislead is a custom more honored in the breach than the observance. However, we will say no more on this point, merely remarking in passing that we are astonished that a gentleman of Mr Clarke's versatility and facile powers of expression should think it necessary to come before the public with a rehash of his old works instead of contributing to the general amusement by a fresh exercise of his talents.

The title story had in fact already been published too, in *The Australasian*.<sup>181</sup> Today Clarke's collecting his stories into a volume would seem to be an unexceptionable practice. Some of his other strategies were more inventive.

In November 1873 Marcus Clarke's six-year association with the *Argus* group came to an end. John Pacini records in *A Century Galloped By: The First Hundred Years of the Victoria Racing Club*<sup>182</sup> that the VRC had refused to issue complimentary press passes for its Spring meeting, on the grounds that there had been applications for over a hundred, when thirty would have been more than adequate. In due course it settled on issuing twenty. In the meantime *The Argus* and *The Age* responded with a threat not to run any report of the Melbourne Cup. *The Herald* chose to

have it both ways, boycotting attendance at the meeting but nonetheless publishing a report, 6 November 1873, 'The Cup, Told by the Camera', reprinted in *A Colonial City*: 'By a judicious employment of the Camera Obscura, a person could absolutely sit at the editorial desk of *The Herald*, and still see the racecourse at Flemington.' (184)<sup>183</sup>

'The report which, with eyes fixed upon the picture before us, we dictated through a speaking tube to a shorthand writer' (190) was of course a hoax. It read like something out of a novel. Indeed, it was out of a novel. Clarke had adapted it from his account of a race in Chapter 50 of his first novel, *Long Odds*, published some four years earlier.<sup>184</sup>

The manager of *The Argus*, Gowen Evans, was not amused that Clarke was writing for *The Herald*. He wrote to him:

I quite admit having told you that we should not be too anxious to enquire for whom you wrote, but I don't recollect having been informed that you were writing for the *Herald*. It seems to me that if I had known, I should not have consented to that particular connection. The *Herald* has broken every rule of professional etiquette, and I should not consider it safe to allow anyone connected with that office to come inside ours. I don't mean to insinuate that you would deliberately give any information gleaned from your access to our office, but you might unintentionally mention things that would most certainly be by the *Herald* people put to any use that might suit their interest or their malice. Therefore you must choose between us and the *Herald*, and as long as *I* have anything to do with the editorial arrangements, I will not submit to be brought in contact with anyone whom I know to come from that office.

Hamilton Mackinnon quotes the letter in *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume* (1884) and remarks: 'No *independent* journalist could well be blamed for withdrawing himself from so autocratic a patronage,



even at pecuniary loss.' The letter is not quoted in the biography in the later *Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke* (1890).<sup>185</sup>

It was the sad end to an extraordinarily productive relationship with the daily *Argus*, the weekly *Australasian* and the monthly *Australasian Sketcher* that had provided the original home for material Clarke reassembled for four of his books — *The Peripatetic Philosopher* (1869), *Old Tales of a Young Country* (1871), *Holiday Peak* (1873) and *Four Stories High* (1877).

Having broken with *The Argus* and *The Australasian*, Clarke needed to establish a regular connection with another newspaper group. He turned to the *Brisbane Courier*, and its associated weekly, *The Queenslander*. 20 December 1873 they published 'The First Queensland Explorer', originally run in *The Australasian* in 1870 and already collected in *Old Tales of a Young Country*, and January 3, 1874 they published his story 'Basau: or, the Gypsies of the Sea', which had appeared in *The Herald* the previous month.

Both Queensland publications then serialized *Long Odds*, from January to June 1874, and *His Natural Life*, from June 1875 to February 1876. *Long Odds* had already been serialized in Clarke's *Colonial Monthly* in 1868–9, published as a book in 1869, and serialized again in *The Australian Journal* in 1872. *His Natural Life* had originally been serialized in *The Australian Journal* from 1870 to 1872, and then published in a revised and shorter form as a book in 1874. It was this shorter text that the *Courier* and *Queenslander* serialized.

As well as extracting further mileage from already published material, on 21 August 1875 Clarke began a new column for *The Brisbane Courier* and *The Queenslander*, 'Country Leisure':

My retreat is a very humble one, and — so far as I have at present constructed it — consists but of one room. That room, however, is filled with the best companions in the world. Poets, sages, dramatists, meet me there whenever I make a party of pleasure, and hold with me the most

delightful conversations. It is not every day, however, that I can escape to the pleasant fields and green meadows in which my little estate is situated. Like Horace, I have my duty in the city ... Other folks' business jumps up about me on all sides — 'Remember, you are a witness in the trespass case, your solicitors want to see you about your friend's dishonored acceptance — try and get this poem into the *Polynesian*.' If I say that I will do my best, the poetaster cries 'That's all nonsense, my dear fellow, you can if you like you know!' But in the country one has no such troubles.

It was with poets that he dealt in his second 'Country Leisure' paper, 4 September 1875. It is notable as Clarke's fullest engagement with his poetic contemporaries. And it contains his first proclamation of the establishment of a school of Australian poetry: 'If I do not much mistake, Australia will have a school of poetry peculiarly her own.' And then he continues:

In historic Europe, where every rood of ground is hallowed in legend and in song, the least imaginative can find food for sad and sweet reflection. When strolling at noon down an English country lane, looking at sunset by some ruined chapel on the margin of an Irish lake, or watching the mists of morning unveil Ben Lomond, we feel all the charm which springs from association with the past. Soothed, saddened, and cheered by turns, we partake the varied moods which belong not so much to ourselves as to the dead men who in old days sung, suffered, or conquered in the scenes which we survey. But this our native or adopted land has no past, no story. No poet speaks to us. Do we need a poet to interpret Nature's teachings, we must look into our own hearts, if perchance we may find a poet there.

What is the dominant note of Australian scenery? That

which is the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry. Weird Melancholy. A poem like 'L'Allegro' could never be written by an Australian. It is too airy, too sweet, too freshly happy.

The entire passage was recycled into the Preface Clarke contributed to Gordon's poems the following year. Clarke then continued in the 'Country Leisure' piece:

An Australian might readily write in the strain of 'Ulalume', 'The Raven', or 'The Fall of the House of Usher'. Australians have written 'The Four Graves', 'Our Hope', 'The Sick Stockrider', and 'Ghost Glen'. Undoubtedly the chief of those who have attempted to climb the shining heights is Henry Kendall, of Sydney, the author of the poem last named. He has caught clearly the wild and grotesque spirit of his native forest.

Then, after the tribute to Kendall, Clarke recycled a paragraph that he had originally published in September 1874 as part of the text to the monthly series *Pictures in the National Gallery Melbourne*, and collected in book form in 1875. The paragraph was part of a description of Nicholas Chevalier's 'The Buffalo Ranges'.

Soon after his arrival in Melbourne in 1863 Clarke had written of his admiration for Chevalier's work to Cyril Hopkins, who quotes the letter in *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*: 'We have a real live artist here. I mean an artist in the true sense of the word; a Monsieur Chevalier. His pictures are very clever — perhaps too microscopic; remind one of Birket Foster and Olssen mixed together.'<sup>186</sup> Chevalier, born in St Petersburg in 1828, came to Australia in 1855, where he became a popular cartoonist for *Punch*, and introduced chromolithography to Victoria. 'The Buffalo Ranges' won first prize in a competition organized by the commissioners of the National Gallery in 1864.<sup>187</sup>

In this 'Country Leisure' piece, the paragraph serves as a commentary on Kendall's poetry. But Clarke later recycled it again in his Preface to Gordon's poetry.

The Australian mountain forests are funereal, secret, stern. Their solitude is desolation. They seem to stifle, in their black gorges, a story of sullen despair. No tender sentiment is nourished in their shade. In other lands the dying year is mourned, the falling leaves drop lightly on his bier. In the Australian forests no leaves fall. The savage winds shout among the rock clefts. From the melancholy gums strips of white bark hang and rustle. The very animal life of these frowning hills is either grotesque or ghostly. Great grey kangaroos hop noiselessly over the coarse grass. Flights of white cockatoos stream out, shrieking like evil souls. The sun suddenly sinks, and the mopokes burst out into horrible peals of semi-human laughter. The natives aver that, when night comes, from out the bottomless depth of some lagoon the bunyip rises, and, in form like a monstrous sea-calf, drags his loathsome length from out the ooze. From a corner of the silent forest rises a dismal chant, and around a fire dance natives painted like skeletons. All is fear-inspiring and gloomy. No bright fancies are linked with the memories of the mountains. Hopeless explorers have named them out of their sufferings — Mount Misery, Mount Dreadful, Mount Despair. As when among sylvan scenes in places

Made green with the running of rivers,  
And gracious with temperate air,  
the soul is soothed and satisfied, so, placed before the frightful grandeur of these barren hills, it drinks in their sentiment of defiant ferocity, and is steeped in bitterness.

In his 'Country Leisure' piece Clarke then quotes the opening of Kendall's 'The Fate of the Explorers':

Set your face towards the darkness — tell of Deserts weird  
and wide,  
Where unshaken woods are huddled, and the languid  
waters glide;  
Turn and tell of deserts lonely, lying pathless, deep and vast,  
Where in utter silence ever Time seems slowly breathing  
past —  
Silence only broken when the Sun is flecked with cloudy  
bars,  
Or when tropic storms come hurtling underneath the sultry  
stars!  
Deserts thorny, hot and thirsty, where the feet of men are  
strange,  
And Eternal Nature sleeps in solitudes which know no  
change.

This is wonderfully accurate. It could not have been written  
by any but a man with an exquisitely keen sense of natural  
beauty, and a heart attuned to the special and immediate  
recognition of the fascination which dwells in loneliness  
and desolation.

When Henry Kendall attempts love measures, mark how  
he falls into the style of Poe ... But in the following the  
bush-glamour is upon him again, and he gives us a picture  
unmatched for local color and truth.

Swarthy wastelands wide and woodless, glistening  
miles and miles away,

Where the south wind seldom wanders, and the  
winters will not stay:

Lurid wastelands, pent in silence, thick with hot and  
thirsty sighs,

Where the scanty thorn leaves twinkle with their  
haggard hopeless eyes;

Furnaced wastelands, trenched with hillocks, like to  
stony billows rolled,

Where the naked flats lie twirling, like a sea of  
darkened gold;

Burning wastelands, glancing upward with a weird and  
vacant stare,

Where the languid heavens quiver o'er red depths of  
stirless air!

The passage quoted is the opening of Kendall's 'Fainting by the Way'. After some close focus on 'the force of the epithets' Clarke remarks: 'The poetic instinct is sure and keen throughout.'

In the original text attached to the Chevalier painting, Clarke went on to refer to foreign rather than Australian writers: 'Amid all this sadness there is that weird delight, which Hoffman, Poe and Hawthorne have expressed in their stories.' In the 'Country Leisure' article and the Gordon Preface Clarke omitted this sentence but retained the adjective 'weird' and the reference to Poe, reshaping them into the memorable 'What is the dominant note of Australian scenery? That which is the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry. Weird Melancholy.'

After its publication in the Gordon Preface the phrase 'weird melancholy' achieved wide acceptance as a description of the bush, and as a characterization of Gordon's poetry. But in the earlier 'Country Leisure' article, the recurrence of 'weird' in the passages Clarke quotes from Kendall, and in his characterization of 'Ghost Glen', suggest that Kendall was very much in his mind. And the paragraph from the description of Chevalier's 'The Buffalo Ranges' had served as a commentary on Kendall's poetry in the 'Country Leisure' piece before Clarke recycled it again in his Preface to Gordon's poetry.

After dealing with Kendall, Clarke's 'Country Leisure' continues:

No less accurate are the verses of Adam Lindsay Gordon — now gone to his rest — when he permits himself to speak of the scenery of the land where he laid his bones. In that most pathetic and beautiful of lyrics, ‘The Sick Stockrider’ he writes

’Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming grass,

To wander as we’ve wandered many a mile,  
And blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white wreaths pass,

Sitting loosely in the saddle all the while.

’Twas merry ’mid the blackwoods, when we spied the station roofs,

To wheel the wild scrub cattle at the yard,  
With a running fire of stockwhips and a fiery run of hoofs;

Oh! the hardest day was never then too hard!

Aye! we had a glorious gallop after ‘Starlight’ and his gang,

When they bolted from Sylvester’s on the flat;  
How the sun-dried reed-beds crackled, how the flint-strewn ranges rang

To the strokes of ‘Mountaineer’ and ‘Acrobat’.

Hard behind them in the timber, harder still across the heath,

Close beside them through the tea-tree scrub we dash’d;

And the golden-tinted fern leaves, how they rustled underneath

And the honeysuckle osiers, how they crash’d!

This is genuine. There is no ‘feather-bed soldier’, no poetic ‘evolution from internal consciousness’ here. The writer has ridden his ride, as well as written of it. The name

of Gordon awakes sad memories in those who knew him. I will end this brief mention of his genius — though the classic student will find much to repay him in the many Browning-Landor poems which bear the poet's name — by the quotation of the last two stanzas of the poem ... Pray read the poem through, guest of mine, and tell me if you do not feel what Kingsley calls 'a lump in your throat' at the last couplet.

The last lines of the poem are italicized in Clarke's quotation:

Let me slumber in the hollow where the wattle blossoms  
wave,

With never stone or rail to fence my bed;

Should the sturdy station children pull the bush  
flowers on my grave,

I may chance to hear them romping overhead.

In his biographical introduction to the *Memorial Volume* and the *Austral Edition* Hamilton Mackinnon records Clarke's reaction to the poem:

To those who knew Gordon and Clarke intimately, the keen sympathy of genius existing between them was easily understood, for there was, despite many outward differences of manner, a wonderful similarity in their natures. Both were morbidly sensitive; both broodingly pathetic; both sarcastically humorous; both socially reckless; both literary Bohemians of the purest water — sons of genius and children of impulse. That the deep feeling for the dead poet and friend lasted till death with Marcus Clarke was evidenced by his frequently repeating when in dejected spirits those pathetically regretful lines of 'The Sick Stockrider':



I have had my share of pastime and I've done my share  
of toil,

And life is short — the longest life a span;

I care not now to tarry for the corn or for the oil,

Or for the wine that maketh glad the heart of man.

For good undone and gifts misspent and resolutions  
vain

'Tis somewhat late to trouble. This I know —

I should live the same life over if I had to live again;

And the chances are I go where most men go.

And to see him seated at the piano humming these  
lines to his own accompaniment, while the tears kept  
rolling down his cheeks, was proof enough that the tender  
chords of a beloved memory were being struck, and that the  
living son of genius mourned for his dead brother as only  
genius can mourn.<sup>188</sup>

Clarke's 'Country Leisure' essay, having dealt with Kendall and  
Gordon, then turns to another fellow member of the Yorick Club:

Mr George Gordon McCrae has written some lyrics  
finished with the nicest taste, but there is in his writing little  
which may be claimed as purely Australian. Mr McCrae,  
in common with the majority of our writers, is Australian  
only by accident. His tastes and sympathies are all of the  
old world. At a 'Carnival Ball', hanging over a 'Bridge  
at Calais', or meditating upon the fate of the 'Prisoner  
in the Iron Mask' he can utter the sweetest of notes, but  
the country of his adoption is to him bleak and barren of  
interest. The same may be said in almost equal measure of  
your special Queenslander, Mr Brunton Stephens. Despite  
the 'Our Hope', which is inspired by true local influence,  
Mr Stephens does not fulfil the conditions of time and

place. He thinks more of the singers of the Old World than of the beauties of the New. The Queensland National Anthem is highly poetical, but it might have been written at Susquehanna for all the Australian color in it.

After quoting and discussing work by 'Australis' and Charles Harpur, Clarke announces: 'But now for a true Australian ballad — wild, weird, and terrible — the "Ghost Glen" of Henry Kendall.' Clarke quotes the poem in full, declaring:

This is the true 'Spirit of the Lands'. I stand at the door of my cottage and see the evening shadows creep up and enfold the strange and haggard trees. All is fantastic and unreal. The moon is frightened to rise. The mountains murmur. Nature seems naked and ashamed. Yet how wildly, how subtly sweet is the charm of this desolation, or rather this ignorance of culture.

The 'Country Leisure' essay then concludes with a now justly famous passage, originally attached to Louis Buvelôt's 'Waterpool near Coleraine' in the text to the May 1874 number of *Pictures in the National Gallery Melbourne* and later recycled again as the conclusion to the Gordon preface:

Australia has rightly been named the Land of the Dawning. Wrapped in the mists of early morning, her history looms vague and gigantic. The lonely horseman riding between the moonlight and the day sees vast shadows creeping across the shelterless and silent plains, hears strange noises in the primeval forest where flourishes a vegetation long dead in other lands, and feels, despite his fortune, that the trim utilitarian civilization which bred him shrinks into insignificance beside the contemptuous grandeur of forests

and ranges coeval with an age in which European scientists have cradled his own race.

There is a poem in every form of tree or flower, but the poetry which lives in the trees and flowers of Australia differs from those of other countries. Europe is the home of knightly song, of bright deeds and clear morning thought. Asia sinks beneath the weighty recollections of her past magnificence, as the Suttee sinks, jewel-burdened upon the corpse of dread grandeur, destructive even in its death. America swiftly hurries on her way, rapid, glittering, insatiable even as one of her own giant waterfalls. From the jungles of Africa, and the creeper-tangled groves of the Islands of the South, arise, from the glowing hearts of a thousand flowers, heavy and intoxicating odours — the Upas-poison which dwells in barbaric sensuality. In Australia alone is to be found the Grotesque, the Weird, the strange scribblings of Nature learning how to write. Some see no beauty in our trees without shade, our flowers without perfume, our birds who cannot fly, and our beasts who have not yet learned to walk on all fours. But the dweller in the wilderness acknowledges the subtle charm of this fantastic land of monstrosities. He becomes familiar with the beauty of loneliness. Whispered to by the myriad tongues of the wilderness, he learns the language of the barren and the uncouth, and can read the hieroglyphs of haggard gum-trees, blown into odd shapes, distorted with fierce hot winds, or cramped with cold nights when the Southern Cross freezes in a cloudless sky of icy blue. The phantasmagoria of that wild dreamland termed the bush interprets itself, and the poet of our desolation begins to comprehend why free Esau loved his heritage of desert sand better than all the bountiful richness of Egypt.

The sustained appreciation of Kendall is significant in the context of what was often a strained relationship between Clarke and Kendall. Hamilton Mackinnon remarked: "The idiosyncrasies of the two men were in many respects widely dissimilar — Clarke's belonging to the polished school of the Old World while Kendall's were akin to those of his own native land, in the New World, but the acquaintanceship ripened into mutual admiration and friendship."<sup>189</sup>

In due course the relationship soured. Kendall described Clarke, under the name of Perks, in 'A Colonial Literary Club, by a Wandering Bohemian', in the *Town and Country Journal*, 4 February 1871:

A casual observer of this young writer would very likely set him down as being merely a brilliant mime with a considerable stock of vanity, and a clever way of persuading everybody that he knew everything. Perks was not a genius, but he was something more than a brilliant mime. There was stuff in the man — good stuff too, only he himself did not appear to value it. Nothing seemed to satisfy him better than the borrowed and theatrical garb under which he contrived, too successfully sometimes, to hide his inherent gifts; in short, to affect the cynicism of a Coldstream, to carry that affectation into ordinary conversation, to make it the staple of his literary work, to look, talk, and write like a *blasé* libertine, constituted the chiefest delight of my juvenile friend — my budding philosopher. Occasionally, however, in rare and happy moments, he would fling his cant aside, and speak or write out his own thought like a man, and it is to those brief spaces of time that we are indebted for all that is worthy of association with his name. Should any of my readers be curious to know more of the gentleman immortalized here under the nom-de-plume of Perks, they can hunt up the files of a great Melbourne weekly and glance over its gossip, with a perfect faith that

they will find his portrait painted there in glowing colours by himself.<sup>190</sup>

This is how the mercurial Clarke — upper-middle class Englishman, Bohemian, man of the theatre, *flâneur*, columnist, wit — could appear to the rather gloomy, wage-slave, Native Australian Poet Kendall.<sup>191</sup> But Clarke's generous assessment of Kendall in his 'Country Leisure' piece, and in the later piece on Kendall and Brunton Stephens in the *Leader* supplement, 19 March 1881,<sup>192</sup> and Kendall's similarly generous assessment of Clarke in *The Freeman's Journal*, 2 March 1872, importantly attest to the readiness of both of them to transcend personal disagreements. 'As a novelist,' Kendall wrote, Marcus Clarke 'stands head and shoulders over all who have attempted storytelling and character-painting in these colonies.'<sup>193</sup>

Adam Lindsay Gordon committed suicide in 1870. In 1876 Clarson, Massina & Co reissued his *Sea-Spray and Smoke Drift*, first published by George Robertson in 1867, with a new preface by Marcus Clarke. Clarke began:

The poems of Gordon have an interest beyond the mere personal one which his friends attach to his name. Written, as they were, at odd times and leisure moments of a stirring and adventurous life, it is not to be wondered at if they are unequal or unfinished. The astonishment of those who knew the man, and can gauge the capacity of this city to foster poetic instinct, is, that such work was ever produced here at all. Intensely nervous, and feeling much of that shame at the exercise of the higher intelligence which besets those who are known to be renowned in field sports, Gordon produced his poems shyly, scribbled them on scraps of paper, and sent them anonymously to magazines. It was not until he discovered one morning that everybody knew a couplet or two of 'How We Beat the Favourite' that

he consented to forego his anonymity and appear in the unsuspected character of a verse maker.

Sir Frank Madden confirmed the poem's immediate impact: 'within a few days every sporting man in Melbourne knew it by heart. We were all horsemen then, and looked upon steeplechasing as the acme of the sport.'<sup>194</sup>

Clarke's Preface contains some sketchy biographical details and recollections of Gordon. 'I do not propose to criticize the volumes which these few lines of preface introduce to the reader,' he announced, but he did remark that 'in such poems as the "Sick Stockrider" we perceive the genuine poetic instinct united to a very clear perception of the loveliness of duty and labour.' And Clarke again proclaims the achievement of what he and Gordon and Kendall had been labouring to establish, the foundations of a future literature of Australia: 'The student of these unpretending volumes will be repaid for his labour. He will find in them something very like the beginnings of a national school of Australian poetry.'

About a third of the preface is new. For the other two-thirds, Clarke recycled the material from his 'Country Leisure' essay of the previous year, including its already recycled material from his text to *Pictures in the National Gallery Melbourne*.

The preface was reprinted in 1880 when A.H. Massina reissued *Sea-Spray and Smoke Drift* combined with *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes* and *Ashtaroth*, under the title *Poems of the Late Adam Lindsay Gordon*. Ronald G. Campbell recorded in his history of Massina's: 'Gordon's *Poems* was another bestseller, 20,000 volumes being disposed of between 1880 and the end of the decade.'<sup>195</sup> Marianne Ehrhardt lists twenty-four editions of the *Poems* in the next twenty-eight years. Ian F. McLaren assembled 88 editions and variations of it containing the Preface in his collection of Gordon's works, now in the Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne.<sup>196</sup>

Recycling material from the description of a couple of paintings

and a literary column might seem a strange way to write a preface to a friend's book. Brian Elliott writes: 'The utilization of the passages was not incongruous, since Clarke had Gordon's poetry in mind when he wrote them'.<sup>197</sup> Perhaps. Interestingly, in his original text to Chevalier's portrayal of the Buffalo Ranges, Clarke had quoted a description of the Alpine Chain from *The Discovery and Exploration of Australia* (1865) by Gordon's old friend Father Julian Tenison Woods. But the recycled passages had previously been applied to Kendall's work in the 'Country Leisure' essay. Maybe Clarke had both Gordon and Kendall in mind.

We do not know Clarke's immediate circumstances at the time of writing the preface — how busy, how stressed, how pressed for time he was. After his bankruptcy and the consequent sale of his library in 1874, he may not have had copies of Gordon's books to work from. Among the volumes listed in the sale catalogue were Gordon's *Ashtaroath*, marked 'scarce' and 'now out of print,' *Sea Spray and Smoke-drift*, in a 'special edition, on toned paper,' and *Bush Ballads and Galloping Rhymes*.<sup>198</sup> Perhaps he was unable to assemble adequate biographical details; perhaps he found himself unable or unwilling to write extended literary criticism. Perhaps he felt the material he had written on the paintings was too good to be lost to view, so used it again. In that he was correct. Because of its evocation of Australian scenery, the Preface has been endlessly reprinted and cited, not only in editions of Gordon's and Clarke's work, but in anthologies and studies of both Australian literary criticism and Australian landscape.

Shorn of its reference to Gordon, Mackinnon reprinted a section of Clarke's preface as 'Australian Scenery' in the *Memorial Volume* and as the opening item of part 2 of the *Austral Edition*, 'Australian Tales and Sketches', which was reprinted separately as *Australian Tales*, (A.W. Bruce, Melbourne, 1896), and *Australian Tales of the Bush* (George Robertson, Melbourne, 1897).

Clarke's Gordon preface contains some of the best known writing about the Australian bush ever written.<sup>199</sup> As Brian Elliott remarks: 'In its own time it was the revelation of a new poetic faith in the landscape

of Australia. Pruned of its artful effects, it does express very perceptively the kind of sensibility which had developed in Australia in appreciation of the native landscape.<sup>200</sup> In his biography Cyril Hopkins reflected on Clarke's impressions of Australian scenery:

These are to be found in scattered passages throughout his works, but nowhere in such striking form as in his well known introduction to Adam Lindsay Gordon's volume of bush ballads, so much so, that it has come to be regarded less as an essay on their poetical merits than as one on his own impressions of Australian scenery. Be that as it may, however, this introduction or preface to Gordon's verses was regarded by Lord Lytton and other eminent literary men as the finest piece of work that ever came from the pen of Marcus Clarke.

He continued:

Immaterial whether every allusion to the animal and vegetable life of the region he is describing — his version of its fauna and flora — be or be not strictly accurate. He is merely striving to reproduce, in striking and brilliant language, the mental impressions acquired during his sojourn in its midst, impressions of a wild nature which had awed and yet partly captivated his easily excited imagination and which continued to haunt it long after he had left the scenes where it is present, and was living amidst quite other surroundings, just as the refrain of some melody, learnt in childhood, haunts us at intervals throughout our after-life, forgotten for long periods at a time but suddenly recurring to our memory and never entirely losing its potency and charm.

In short, he is aiming at drawing a vivid picture of



certain phenomena which he had studied at close quarters and of thus conveying to his readers some idea of that 'subtle charm' attributed by himself and by others to the nature of the wild Australian bush.<sup>201</sup>

## *Old Tales of a Young Country*

*Old Tales of a Young Country* is the companion volume to Marcus Clarke's classic novel *His Natural Life*, which he was writing at the same time and for which he was drawing on the same store of historical materials. In the appendix Clarke provided for *His Natural Life*, he cites 'The Seizure of the Cyprus' and 'The Last of Macquarie Harbour' in *Old Tales of a Young Country* as source material, as if to provide factual substantiation for material that otherwise might have seemed highly improbable.<sup>202</sup> In addition, the shipboard mutiny in 'George Barrington, Pickpocket and Historian' provides the basis for the mutiny Rufus Dawes discovers and reveals in *His Natural Life*. And the hallucinatory horrors experienced by Michael Howe in 'The Rule of the Bushranger' are drawn on for John Rex's horrors of conscience at the blowhole.

*Old Tales of a Young Country* is a significant work in its own right, in no way merely an adjunct to *His Natural Life*. A.G. Stephens wrote in *The Bulletin*'s red page, 29 April 1889: 'When Clarke was at his best he had a peg to hang his thoughts on. Some of his presentations of old Australian stories are wonderfully well done. He has taken a dull record and sown it with flashes of wit and phrase, as Dumas sowed the work of his collaborators, till the whole page shines and glitters. And he brings usually a shrewd, critical head to aid his commentary.'<sup>203</sup>

*His Natural Life* is presented as a novel, but draws solidly on historical fact. *Old Tales of a Young Country* is presented as history, but no less than *His Natural Life* is a work of conscious, literary intent. Clarke was creating a history for a new world, saving from oblivion the extraordinary stories

and amazing characters of Australia's European settlement. It was both an historical and a literary project.

H.G. Turner wrote positively about *Old Tales* in the *Melbourne Review*, January 1882: 'In the *Old Tales of a Young Country* Marcus Clarke tells in terse language, but picturesque style, the story of some dozen episodes in old colonial life that are far stranger than fiction, and but that they are disfigured by the too prevalent brutality of fifty years ago, every one of them might be worked up into a far more attractive novel than the average of the circulating libraries of today affords.' 'A most interesting volume,' he described it in *Once a Month* in 1885. Turner reprinted the *Melbourne Review* comments in his essay on Clarke in the collaborative volume he wrote with Alexander Sutherland, *The Development of Australian Literature* (1898), adding 'he dressed in a pleasant diction some of the more notable of the musty records of the early settlements.'<sup>204</sup>

Hamilton Mackinnon observed in his biographical introduction to *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*: 'These sketches, though highly interesting as historical records of the colonies, were for the most part worked up from old and dry pamphlets and papers. But in the retelling they were stamped by the genius of the master-hand, as only men of his mental calibre are able to do.'<sup>205</sup>

Cyril Hopkins characterized the work in his memoir of Clarke as that of 'an historical writer whose specialty is neither that of regular history nor yet historical fiction, but a faculty for selecting certain incidents from the records of early colonial days and presenting them in a new light — that of entertaining narratives.' He concluded: 'some readers may well indeed prefer the picturesque sketches of Australian scenery, the light banter of the "Peripatetic Philosopher", and the intensely interesting narratives of the early days of settlement in the island-continent ... to the theme of that powerful but gloomy and hopelessly depressing story *For the Term of his Natural Life*.'<sup>206</sup>

In *Australia and New Zealand* (1873) Anthony Trollope devotes a page to Australian literature, effectively denying that there is any: 'The

production of books must follow the production of other things, and the growth of literature will be slow. Victoria, however, and the Australian colonies generally, have produced many books. I cannot say that as yet their volumes are to be found crowding the shelves of European libraries.' After enumerating and dismissing the sort of books produced, in particular, poetry — 'how vast a number of small volumes' — he then singles out one prose writer for sole mention: 'I cannot thus allude to the literature of the colony at large without mentioning the name of Mr. Marcus Clarke, of Melbourne, whose Australian tales are not only known familiarly by all colonists, but are almost as familiar to English readers.'<sup>207</sup> Trollope was clearly referring to *Old Tales of a Young Country*, since his *Australia and New Zealand* had been published early in 1873, before Clarke's *Holiday Peak and Other Tales* appeared in May that year.

Mark Twain certainly knew some of the *Old Tales of a Young Country* from their inclusion in Hamilton Mackinnon's *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, a copy of which he acquired during his 1895 Australian visit, and which is now preserved in the Twain collection at the University of California at Berkeley. He draws on Clarke's account of William Buckley in *More Tramps Abroad* (1897), the fuller, English edition of *Following the Equator: a Journey around the World*. Twain wrote: 'It takes Australia to beat the record. The other Crusoes are gone for years, and come back ostentatiously gotten up in goat skins for effect, but the Australian kind are gone a generation and come modestly back without anything on at all, so as not to attract attention.'

At the end of the paragraph Twain had written in the manuscript: 'Let Marcus Clarke tell the rest of the story: copyist please copy out and insert here, from *Selected Works of Marcus Clarke* [the *Austral Edition*] beginning at this mark ... It is about 1,000 words.' Beneath is a pencilled note: 'C[hatto] and W[indus] never had this extract ... the book is not procurable in England.'<sup>208</sup> But the material was never copied into either the American or the English edition of the published book.

Walter Murdoch contributed an article about Clarke's works to *The Argus*, 22 October 1904, reprinted in his *Loose Leaves*: 'Much might be

said of the *Old Tales of a Young Country*,’ he wrote, but unfortunately he did not go on to say it.<sup>209</sup>

Since 1867 Clarke had been writing for the Melbourne daily *The Argus* and its associated weekly, *The Australasian*. His column in *The Australasian*, the ‘Peripatetic Philosopher,’ proved immensely popular, and a selection from it provided him with his first book, *The Peripatetic Philosopher* (1869). In 1868, having come into some money, he had purchased the *Colonial Monthly* magazine. He serialized his first novel *Long Odds* in its pages, but commercially the magazine was never the success he had hoped for. In August 1869, after eighteen months’ ownership and editorship, he relinquished control of the *Colonial Monthly* to J.J. Shillinglaw. Clarke’s involvement contributed ultimately to his bankruptcy, as he declared in his affidavit of January 1875:

In the year 1868 I in conjunction with some others started in Melbourne a magazine called the *Colonial Monthly*, and spent more than one thousand pounds in endeavouring to establish it; and in consequence of my partners not paying their share the whole of the expense fell upon me and I had to borrow at heavy interest to meet it. And I received no remuneration from the said publication.<sup>210</sup>

It is unclear how Clarke was able immediately after surrendering the *Colonial Monthly* to begin a new magazine, *Humbug – A Weekly Illustrated Journal of Satire*. But he did. The first issue appeared 8 September 1869. Clarke stated in his bankruptcy affidavit: ‘In 1869 I endeavoured to establish a weekly comic journal called *Humbug* and spent considerable sums of money on it, but received no remuneration returns.’<sup>211</sup> Both the *Colonial Monthly* and *Humbug* ceased publication in January 1870.

According to Hamilton Mackinnon, ‘soon after this time overwork had told its tale upon the restless brain, and the doctors ordered change of air to the more salubrious climate of Tasmania. But as funds were, as usual with him, decidedly short, how was the change to be effected?’<sup>212</sup> The

printer and publisher of the *Australian Journal*, A.H. Massina recalled the solution in an interview on his retirement forty years later:

Clarke came to me one day and said, 'Massina, I want £50.'

'Oh', I said, 'You've had enough out of me. What more do you want?'

'£50,' replied Clarke, 'I can write a story for your journal. I am going to Tasmania to write up the criminal records and I'll do the story for one hundred pounds.'

We jumped at it.<sup>213</sup>

Clarke may already have arranged for the *Argus* group, with its associated weekly *The Australasian*, to help finance the holiday by a journalistic assignment 'to write up the criminal records.' F.W. Haddon, the editor of *The Argus*, had visited Tasmania the previous January. Now he went there again with Clarke.

Frederick William Haddon was like Clarke a Londoner. Born in Croydon in 1839, he was recruited by two proprietors of *The Argus*, Edward Wilson and Lachlan Mackinnon and arrived in Melbourne in December 1863, the same year as Clarke. He was appointed foundation co-editor of *The Australasian*, the new weekly companion to the daily *Argus*, when it began publication on 1 October 1864, and from 1865 was the sole editor. 1 January 1867 Haddon was appointed editor of *The Argus*.

Between January and October 1867 *The Australasian* had serialized Owen Suffolk's *Days of Crime and Years of Suffering*. David Dunstan in his introduction to the modern edition of Suffolk's convict memoir notes that, from the editorial comment and the correspondence generated, the serial was a success. It was, he adds, 'a major investment on the paper's part in terms of column space and credibility.'<sup>214</sup> Either Clarke or Haddon or someone else at the *Argus* group had realized that a further exploration of convictism was likely to have a similar appeal to those readers who had followed Owen Suffolk's recollections. Clarke had written on low life

and night life and the margins of society in his three part series 'Night Scenes in Melbourne' in *The Argus* in 1868 and in his six part series 'Lower Bohemia' in *The Australasian* in 1869.<sup>215</sup> In the concluding Lower Bohemia piece, 'In Outer Darkness', Clarke recalls 'a conversation we once had':

The old man was speaking of Owen Suffolk (the man who wrote 'Days of Crime and Years of Suffering' in the *Australasian*), and said that he had known him well; and been in gaol with him at Ballarat. His opinion was not complimentary. Mr Suffolk was 'flash,' and had 'split on his pals'; and, in addition, was — to use the narrator's own words 'the —est liar I ever see.' Such is fame.<sup>216</sup>

An extension into the convict records by Clarke was natural and appropriate. Or could be presented as such.

Clarke refers to Owen Suffolk's *Days of Crime and Years of Suffering* in his account of 'George Barrington' in *Old Tales of a Young Country*, and he adopts the same structural contrast of Suffolk's 'Days' against 'Years', a catchy opposition to attract the attention in a title, in his own paradox of 'Old' and 'Young'. Brian Elliott includes Suffolk among the possible sources of *His Natural Life*.<sup>217</sup> It is with an allusion to Suffolk that Clarke explained the non-appearance of his 'Peripatetic Philosopher' column in *The Australasian* for two months in 1868: "The true artist-soul gathers materials from all sides, and I trust that my forthcoming work, *Two Months at Pentridge*, by the author of *A Summer at the Hulks*, will tear away the veil of official turpitude ..."<sup>218</sup> The true reason was, however, as he explained to Cyril Hopkins: 'I have been as nearly dead as it is possible for a man to be. I was thrown from my horse over a jump, and got concussion of the brain, during which I could neither write nor read ...'<sup>219</sup> Jokes have a way of coming strangely true. Two years later Clarke spent his summer, and much longer, effectively gaoled, immersed in the records of imprisonment and convictism of *Old Tales of a Young Country*

and allegedly even locked up by his publisher when writing *His Natural Life*.

On 21 January 1870 Clarke and Haddon arrived in Launceston, and on 26 January they visited Port Arthur. The trip is described in a series of articles Clarke wrote three years later, when the closure of Port Arthur was announced and, no doubt hoping to generate some book sales, a month after *Old Tales of a Young Country* had been published. The three articles were published in *The Argus*, 3, 12 and 26 July 1873, and the last two reprinted in *The Australasian*, 26 July and 2 August.<sup>220</sup> Clarke's reference to the 1830 Tasmanian 'war of extermination, known as the Black War' provoked angry correspondence, with the result that *The Australasian* did not reprint the first article, and Mackinnon excluded it from the *Austral Edition*.

'You will find it difficult to get down to Port Arthur unless you've got friends there!' said the genial but imperative landlady of the Ark Hotel. 'Of course, I mean friends in the *Government*,' she added, seeing that I looked askance.

We had friends in the Government, for Hacker, my companion, was a man of mark at the office of the *Peacock* and had hinted vaguely of columns of lead minion to be supplied by my eminent hand.<sup>221</sup>

Clarke's account of his visit captures the horror of the place.

To me, brooding over stories of misery and crime, sitting beside the ironed convicts, and shivering at the chill breeze which whitened the angry waters of the bay, there was no beauty in those desolate cliffs, no cheering picturesqueness in that frowning shore. I saw Port Arthur for the first time beneath a leaden and sullen sky; and as we sailed inwards past the ruins of Point Puer, and beheld barring our passage to the prison the low grey hummocks of the Island



of the Dead, I felt that there was a grim propriety in the melancholy of nature.

He continues:

I know that I thought to myself that I should go mad were I condemned to such a life, and that I caught one of the men looking at me with a broad grin as I thought it. I know that there seemed to me to hang over the whole place a sort of horrible gloom, as though the sunlight had been withdrawn from it, and that I should have been ashamed to have suddenly met some high-minded friend, inasmuch as it seemed that in coming down to stare at these chained and degraded beings, we had all been guilty of an unmanly curiosity.

There were still some 574 inmates — convicts, invalids and insane at Port Arthur. Looking through the records Clarke asked to see one of them, transported for poaching when he was thirteen:

The warder drew aside a peep-hole in the barred door, and I saw a grizzled, gaunt and half-naked old man coiled in a corner. The peculiar wild-beast smell which belongs to some forms of furious madness exhaled from the cell. The gibbering animal within turned, and his malignant eyes met mine. ‘Take care,’ said the gaoler; ‘he has a habit of sticking his finger through the peep-hole to try and poke someone’s eye out!’ I drew back, and a nail-bitten hairy finger, like the toe of an ape, was thrust with rapid and simian neatness through the aperture. ‘That is how he amuses himself,’ said the good warder, forcing-to the iron slot; ‘he’d best be dead, I’m thinking.’<sup>222</sup>

The experience was a horrifying one; the library researches Clarke made through the published records were no less so. He concludes the third and final 'Port Arthur' piece:

In out-of-the-way corners, in shepherds' huts or roadside taverns, one meets 'old hands' who relate terrible and true histories. In the folio reports of the House of Commons can be read statements which make one turn sick with disgust, and flush hot with indignation. Officialdom, with its crew of parasites and lickspittles, may try to palliate the enormities committed in the years gone by; may revile, with such powers of abuse as are given to it the writers who record the facts which it blushes for; but the sad grim truth remains. For half a century the law allowed the vagabonds and criminals of England to be subjected to a lingering torment, to a hideous debasement, to a monstrous system of punishment futile for good and horribly powerful for evil; and it is with feelings of the most profound delight that we record the abolition of the last memorial of an error fraught with so much misery.<sup>223</sup>

The first part of Clarke's series of articles on the convict records, 'Old Stories Retold', later to be collected as *Old Tales of a Young Country*, appeared in *The Australasian* on 19 February, 1870. The forthcoming serial *His Natural Life* had been advertised in the *Australian Journal* in January and the first instalment appeared in the March issue. The publisher A.H. Massina recalled:

Now Clarke was going to write that story in twelve monthly sections. At first he wrote enough for two months, then enough for one month, and got down to very little. In fact we had once to put it in pica type, instead of brevier to swell out the size of that month's contribution. But on one

occasion he had nothing ready and we had to go to press with an apology to our readers. Finally we had to lock him in a room to get his matter written.<sup>224</sup>

And so *His Natural Life* came into being, ultimately running for twenty-seven episodes instead of the twelve originally agreed upon. The 'Old Stories Retold' series appeared simultaneously, all but two of them appearing in *The Australasian* between February and October 1870, some in multiple parts over two or three weeks, and the last, 'An Australian Crusoe' in three parts in June 1871. *His Natural Life* concluded a year later in June 1872.

The Melbourne Public Library provided Clarke with much of the source materials for his 'Old Stories Retold'. When he collected them in *Old Tales of a Young Country*, Clarke wrote in the 'Preface': 'They were dug out by me at odd times during a period of three years, from the store of pamphlets, books, and records of old times, which is in the Public Library.'<sup>225</sup> Three years would take the beginnings of Clarke's researches back to November 1868, eighteen months before he joined the library staff in June 1870. Maybe he had been researching for some time before going to Tasmania. Maybe he meant two years. He was never that precise about dates, and had a tendency to exaggerate numbers. Clarke assembled an appendix of source materials for *His Natural Life*. With *Old Tales of a Young Country* he indicated the sources he was using in the course of the individual tales. Some twenty books are cited.<sup>226</sup>

As well as books, Clarke was able to draw on various people's recollections of the early settlement. Brian Elliott cites a piece Clarke wrote for the *Leader* supplement, 14 February 1880, in which he recalls talking to the hostess of the Ship Hotel in Hobart. 'What conversations were those in the small bar concerning the early days of the colony, when the hostess was a comely black-eyed girl, and a high-spirited one, I'll be bound.'<sup>227</sup>

Andrew Clarke, Marcus's cousin, had been private secretary to Sir William Denison, Governor of Van Diemen's Land, from 1846–52, and a

superintendent of convict labour in Hobart. After a further seven years as Surveyor-General in Victoria, he returned to England in 1858. Andrew had been brought up in part by Marcus's father while his own father was absent abroad on military duties, according to his biographer R.H. Vetch, and corresponded regularly from Australia with Marcus's father.<sup>228</sup> There is no record of whether Andrew ever discussed his years in Tasmania with the young Marcus in England, but it is not unlikely that something would have been communicated.

In her introduction to the facsimile reissue of *Old Tales* Joan Poole names Lachlan Mackinnon, Mr Austin of Barwon Park, John Pascoe Fawcner, Claude Farie, Captain Fyans and Colonel Anderson as other possible sources of information for Clarke.<sup>229</sup> In 'The Escape of John Mitchell from Van Diemen's Land' Clarke cites Mitchell's own memoir, but Joan Poole notes: 'The story opens with a discussion of the Young Ireland party and the abortive rising of 1848 which owes little to Mitchell but may owe something to Clarke's friendship with Sir Charles Gavan Duffy.'<sup>230</sup> Duffy, a Trustee of the Public Library, was one of Clarke's patrons, and Clarke consulted him for advice when turning the serial version of *His Natural Life* into the book, which he dedicated to Duffy.

And Clarke was able to research some of the enduring punishments of the convict system, such as flogging, as an eye-witness. In his diary for 13 February 1871, John Buckley Castieau, the governor of Melbourne Gaol, records that Marcus Clarke was one of a number of journalists observing a flogging:

There was a man flogged this afternoon. The members of the press and the usual loafers were present in addition to the officials. The prisoner was an old hand with a face that would bring in a verdict of Guilty from most juries. He displayed the most stolid endurance without the slightest bravado or flashness and took his fifty lashes without a groan and scarcely a movement except a horrible twitching and trembling in the muscles of his arms which he kept

strained to the utmost. This was the most severe flogging I have yet seen administered. Marcus Clarke, 'The Peripatetic Philosopher', met me in the street this morning and came to the gaol to see the punishment this afternoon. I was glad to see he did not believe much in its efficacy as a rule though he believed flogging could occasionally be resorted to with advantage. Went into Melbourne in the evening and called at the Yorick.<sup>231</sup>

Clarke had already published all but two of the 'Old Stories Retold' by the time he observed this flogging. But research can also be retrospective, and a writer often returns to a topic to check whether he got it right. Clarke's doubt about the efficacy of the punishment perhaps drew on something of his own experience at Highgate School. The year before the Tasmanian visit Clarke wrote in *The Australasian*, 24 July 1869 how his headmaster

was noted for his use of the birch, and used to smack his lips over a flogging with intense glee. He was a left hander (there was a legend extant to the effect that he had broken his right arm in flogging a boy, but I always doubted it myself), and the way he used to 'draw' the birch was astonishing. He used always to stop after ten strokes, if the victim cried out, but as I was under the impression that he flogged me from purely personal motives, and wanted to show my indifference and skey-orn, I would have died rather than whimper ... I was regarded as a small hero by the whole of the fourth form, and when my particular friend picked out the buds with a pen knife that night, and related a complimentary remark made by Bluggins ma.[major], head of the "sixth" and a Triton among schoolboy minnows, I felt almost happy.<sup>232</sup>

The first thirteen ‘Old Stories Retold’ ran in *The Australasian* from 19 February 1870 through to 22 October 1870. A fourteenth story, ‘An Australian Crusoe’ appeared in three parts on 10, 17 and 24 June 1871. A fifteenth, ‘The Rule of the Bushranger’, never appeared in *The Australasian*. It is possible that Clarke was preserving one original unpublished piece for the book. But this was not the case with his other volumes — everything contained in *The Peripatetic Philosopher* (1869), the novel *Long Odds* (1869), and the story collections *Holiday Peak* (1873) and *Four Stories High* (1877) had first been published earlier in journals.

It may be that ‘The Rule of the Bushranger’ never appeared in *The Australasian* because of the quarrel that had developed between its editor, James Smith, and Clarke. Indeed, it may be that the feud curtailed any further publication of ‘Old Stories Retold’. Clarke’s success clearly rankled with Smith, and in *The Argus*, 18 April 1870, he had reported on comments in the English press on Clarke’s first two books, *The Peripatetic Philosopher* and *Long Odds*, ‘The English press has been pleased to compliment the “Peripatetic Philosopher” of the *Australasian* in a way that must be gratifying to that gentleman’s well-known vanity ...,’ and noting the *Spectator*’s ‘long and critical review in which Mr Clarke’s many and obvious sins of commission and imitation are unsparingly commented on.’ Clarke responded in the ‘Peripatetic Philosopher’ column in *The Australasian*, 23 April, to the reference to his ‘well-known vanity’ in a relaxed sort of way, remarking that *The Argus* writer was not free from a similar charge himself.<sup>233</sup> Apart from such negative comment, Smith had the editor’s traditional weapon of suppression. No mention at all appeared in *The Australasian* of the serial of *His Natural Life* running in *The Australian Journal*. Early in June 1870 Clarson, Massina & Co complained to *The Argus* proprietors: ‘The editor of the *Australasian* was prejudiced against their publication because their leading story was contributed by a writer with whom he is personally unfriendly.’ Hugh George, the manager of *The Argus* told Smith: ‘You have made a mistake, inasmuch as you have acted contrary to the well-known principles upon which the editorial function should be discharged.’<sup>234</sup>

The last of the 'Old Stories Retold' to appear was published on 10, 17 and 24 June 1871. Clarke ceased appearing in *The Australasian* altogether for six months from September 1871. It may be that having relinquished the editorship of *The Australian Journal* that same September, Clarke took the opportunity at this time to focus his energies on the serialization of *His Natural Life*. But Clarke's absence from *The Australasian* may more readily be related to the hostilities between him and Smith. It became one of the issues that led to Smith's being asked to resign as editor. Clarke was still publishing in *The Argus*, which suggests there was no dispute between him and the management. There was a dispute between the management and Smith, however, and at a meeting in December 1871 they expressed their concern about 'the careless and indifferent way in which the editorial duties of the *Australasian* were being performed.' Smith was asked to resign, and did so on 16 January 1872, after two years as editor.<sup>235</sup> After Smith's departure Clarke's contributions resumed.

Meanwhile Clarke realized he had sufficient material for a substantial book. 210 pages, it turned out, when he collected the 'Old Stories Retold' into his third book, *Old Tales of a Young Country*, published by Mason, Firth & McCutcheon, Melbourne, in late 1871. There seems to have been only one printing, but different bindings. Ian McLaren's bibliography of Clarke describes one issue in green cloth board with the title in gilt lettering on the cover (item 18). Ferguson (item 8321) describes one in maroon cloth. It was also sold in an edition in white paper boards (McLaren item 20), designated 'Cheap Edition' on the cover, with the imprint 'Melbourne: George Robertson, 69 Elizabeth Street, MDCCCLXXI.'<sup>236</sup>

The title page proclaims 'By Marcus Clarke, Secretary to the Trustees of the Public Library, Museums, &c., Melbourne' and the following page offers a dedication. 'To the Trustees of the Public Library, Museums, & National Gallery of Victoria, this little work is inscribed, by their obedient servant, the author.' The Preface is dated, '*The Public Library, Museums, &c., Melbourne, 30th November, 1871.*'

When *His Natural Life* appeared in book form in 1874, Clarke's

dedication to Sir Charles Gavan Duffy was likewise given as from The Public Library, Melbourne. And the title page stated that Clarke was 'author of *Old Tales of a Young Country*, *Holiday Peak*, etc.'

In announcing in the Preface to *Old Tales of a Young Country* that his researches for the book came from the library's own holdings, Clarke was clearly presenting his role there as one of publicizing and promoting the library, and drawing attention to its resources. And perhaps implying that writing the book was part of his job, rather than something produced for his own satisfaction in library time. He valued his position at the library and took his role seriously. Especially since it left him ample opportunity to pursue his literary labours. Henry Gyles Turner remarks:

It would be difficult to imagine any position in the Civil Service of Victoria which could present more congenial surroundings to a young literary aspirant than that which Clarke held for some ten years. His actual hours of duty were light, the work involved no great mental strain, and was free from anxiety. He had at command an unlimited supply of raw material from whence to draw inspiration, while scattering his press contributions throughout the Colonies; and he had the advantage of being associated with gentlemen who, in their appreciation of his literary ability, were willing to make allowances for his official shortcomings.<sup>237</sup>

4 December 1871 Clarke wrote to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in England:

I send you by this mail a little book called *Old Tales of a Young Country*. My position as secretary to the trustees of the public library of the colony gives me opportunities of discovering such interesting documents as those quoted in the book and I shall be glad, if you wish, to contribute



similar small sketches now and then to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Mr R.H. Horne knows me slightly and can inform you concerning my capabilities etc. — if you wish to know more than the little book tells.

But the *Gentleman's Magazine* was not responsive. Clarke also sent a copy to the American writer Oliver Wendell Holmes, who replied 19 April 1872, and they corresponded over the following years.<sup>238</sup> He sent another inscribed copy to his friend, the writer and editor Nathaniel Walter Swan at Pleasant Creek in the Wimmera.<sup>239</sup> Ian McLaren's bibliography of Marcus Clarke records three reviews of *Old Tales of a Young Country*: in the *Advocate*, 16 December 1871; *The Argus*, 22 December 1871, and the *Town and Country Journal*, 13 January 1872.

In his 'Preface' to *Old Tales of a Young Country* Clarke modestly declared of the narratives collected, 'I lay claim but to such originality as belongs to the compiler.' But the volume has a coherence of theme and image and tone that makes it far more than a compendium of occasional journalistic pieces. It is a substantial study of the foundation of a new society, and an unforgettable indictment of the brutalities of the convict system. The original title 'Old Stories Retold' for the on-going series of articles has something of the note of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*. In 'The Last of Macquarie Harbour' indeed Clarke refers to 'this twice-told tale' (143). Clarke was doing for Australia what Hawthorne had done for the United States, creating, or drawing attention to, archetypal characters, creating a sense of history and romance. Writing when there were fewer than a hundred years of European settlement in Australia, Clarke nevertheless emphasized the distance of those early days. He makes them far more mysterious, romantic, and strange than in that short span of time they might have been expected to seem: privateers operating from Sydney harbour, castaways on unknown islands, Europeans adopted by Aboriginal tribes, the severed heads of bushrangers. Like Hawthorne, Clarke was searching out materials for the literature of a new world. What resulted was something very different from Hawthorne's 'pale tint

of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade — the coolness of a meditative habit which diffuses itself through the feeling and observation of every sketch. Instead of passion there is sentiment; and even in what purports to be pictures of actual life we have allegory ...'<sup>240</sup> Nothing could be further from Clarke, whose accounts of the convict system seethe with a huge passion, and whose stories are all of active life.

In 'The Settler in Tasmania Fifty Years Ago' Clarke is scornful of the literary references in Dr Ross's reminiscences:

He finds the same difficulty in using an axe that all town-bred gentlemen have found from time immemorial, and his classical allusions to Tityrus, Meliboeus, and Horace's Sabine farm, have been made with more or less success by every 'settler' of any pretensions to scholarship. (124)

Clarke's own volume is studded with literary references. They are, however, of a different order from those classical georgics and pastorals. They are practically all to novelists and dramatists and to their romantic heroes and heroines. He refers to Thackeray (198) and his Barry Lyndon (12, 105), Mrs Crawley, Jos Sedley (181) and Becky Sharpe (12); to Balzac (83) and his Vautrin (12); to Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (18, 19, 167ff); to Laurence Sterne's Captain Tobias Shandy (19); to Norval (18); to Gil Blas (80, 105); to Byron's Childe Harold (84); to Bulwer Lytton's Cousin Jack (161); to John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (80); to Fenimore Cooper's Uncas and Chingachook (25); to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (25) and Ancient Pistol (77); to Edgar Allan Poe (172); to Thomas Carlyle (199); to *Enoch Arden* (183); to Coleridge's Ancient Mariner (176); to Lazarillo de Tormes (80). Clarke was concerned to show that the new world of Australia had comparable literary potential to the world of the European literary tradition.

In his 'Preface' Clarke writes of the 'rude, adventurous life of those earlier colonial days' and the 'romances which it induced'. His literary references are all there to set this tone of adventure, primitive struggle,

and romance with rogues, heroes and characters of extraordinary vigour and resourcefulness. And Clarke is not simply using these references to provide an easy colouration to his Antipodean materials. They are there as touchstones to demonstrate that the heroes and villains of Australia's bygone days are as striking, as memorable, as romantic as any of those of the old world. As Joan Poole writes in her introduction to the facsimile reprint,

It is the romantic quality of these stories from the past that attracts Clarke, and the fact that the stories are true. The element of the extraordinary in the experience of real human beings fascinates Clarke — the material of the sensation novel in everyday life. (6)

Clarke certainly drew on the themes of the sensation novel for some of his short stories. Though here he is attempting something rather different. It is a more serious, representative, mythic romance that he intends and that his literary references point to.

Clarke is proving that the early history of Australia has the materials of romance, and confronting the charges levelled by Frederick Sinnett in 1856 in 'The Fiction Fields of Australia'. Sinnett wrote:

It must be granted, then, that we are quite debarred from all the interest to be extracted from any kind of archaeological accessories. No storied windows, richly dight, cast a dim, religious light over any Australian premises. There are no ruins for that rare old plant, the ivy green, to creep over and make his dainty meal of. No Australian author can hope to extricate his hero or heroines, however pressing the emergency may be, by means of a spring panel and a subterranean passage, or such like relics of feudal barons, and refuges of modern novelists, and the offspring of their imagination. There may be plenty of dilapidated buildings,

but not one, the dilapidation of which is sufficiently venerable by age, to tempt the wandering footsteps of the most arrant parvenu of a ghost that ever walked by night. It must be admitted that Mrs Radcliffe's genius would be quite thrown away here: and we must reconcile ourselves to the conviction that the foundations of a second *Castle of Otranto* can hardly be laid in Australia during our time.<sup>241</sup>

There may not be ghosts and Gothic castles in Australia, but Clarke counters Sinnett by demonstrating that there certainly are romantic characters and adventures. He offers George Barrington, that extraordinary actor and high society pickpocket; or the barbaric exploits of the bushranger Michael Howe; or the adventures of Captain Jorgenson:

the story of his life reads more like a romance than a record of fact. He was a seaman, explorer, traveller, adventurer, gambler, spy, man of letters, man of fortune, political prisoner, dispensing chemist, and King of Iceland, and was transported for illegally pawning the property of a lodging house keeper in Tottenham Court road. (66)

Indeed, the romantic potential of some of these historical events Clarke himself showed by incorporating them into *His Natural Life*, as its appendix documents.

Clarke's tales evoke the years of the convict settlement in all their mystery and brutality, while avoiding the trap of overdoing the 'Australianness'. Clarke is concerned with the events, the characters, the interrelations, the myths. These for him create the Australianness — not the externals of the travelogue. He is concerned to explore the human bases of the society — psychology, motivation, action, the foundations of a consciousness. He avoids the excesses of local colouring that Frederick Sinnett warned of:

It is by a judicious regard to tints — by a few artistic touches about the foliage and so forth, that the distinctive Australianism of the landscape is conveyed. If Australian characteristics are too abundant — its blackfellows, kangaroos, emus, stringy barks, gums, and wattles, and any quantity of other things illustrative of the ethnology, zoology, and botany of the country are crowded together, a great amount of detailed information may be conveyed upon a given number of square inches of canvas than would otherwise be possible, but the picture loses character proportionately as a work of art.<sup>242</sup>

Clarke is aware of these dangers. He is concerned with the hard outlines of his myth, not the accidental surrounds of local colouring. The kangaroos and wallabies and platypuses barely rate a mention.

He has little to say, either, about the indigenous inhabitants of Australia. In both *Old Tales* and *His Natural Life* they are strangely absent. Indicative of his attitude is his treatment of ‘William Buckley, The “Wild White Man”’.

His account of his wanderings is not particularly interesting. The Australian black is as far removed from Uncas and Chingachook, as Uncas and Chingachook from reality. Mr Buckley’s friends had no medicine men, no tents, no Great Spirit, no fawnskin clothes, no moccasins, no calumets, and no buffalo. They were simply a set of filthy, repulsive savages, who daubed themselves with mud, and knew no pleasure save that of gorging. I am afraid that Mr Buckley’s narrative shows the beautiful fallacy of the ‘poetical’ native theory. An Australian Romeo would bear his Juliet off with the blow of a club, and Juliet would prepare herself for her bridal by ‘greasing herself from head to foot with the kidney-fat of her lover’s rival.’ Poor Paris! (25)

Clarke mentions the cordon that was used to round up the indigenous Tasmanians in his account of Jorgenson ‘which ultimately resulted in something very like the complete destruction of the native race’. (102) He even sees something of the potential of a romance in the materials — though the romance is focused on a white missionary:

the story of Mr Robinson, the ‘apostle of the blacks’, who, unarmed and alone, went into the midst of them, and by dint of argument brought whole tribes into submission, is in itself a romance. Jorgenson wanders from his own history to relate some of the exploits of this remarkable man, but as the history of the final subjugation of the native race and the labour of their missionary is worthy of a place to itself, I will reserve further account of them. (103)

But he never wrote the account. When he collected the article in *Old Tales* he added a footnote stating that a full account had since been published in Bonwick’s *Last of the Tasmanians*. Clarke himself never dealt with the material. Significantly, his mention of the missionary Mr Robinson who ‘brought whole tribes into submission’ is one of his very rare comments on missionaries that is not contemptuous, scathing or facetious. The hostility to missionaries is one aspect of Clarke’s opposition to organized religion that runs throughout the *Old Tales* (26, 39, 42, 59, 71, 92, 177–8, 190, 192). In this context, however, Clarke’s priorities seem to be different.

Fenimore Cooper had presented the American Indians as figures of romance. But Clarke’s account of the experiences of William Buckley and of James Murrell, ‘The First Queensland Explorer’, are disappointing. He offers little more than that both of them lived amongst the Aboriginal tribes, and provides little detail. Whereas the seemingly much less promising episode of ‘An Australian Crusoe’ — Charles Goodridge’s memoir of shipwreck on a sealing expedition — arouses Clarke’s excitement. It turns out to have all the Robinson Crusoe materials —

the resourcefulness of the men shipwrecked, salvaging fragments from the wreck, building a shelter, building a boat, living off unlikely foods, establishing an ordered society.

The danger of the literary approach that says, 'We have all we need of materials for literature in this new society' is a constricting insularity. The writers draw on fewer and fewer materials, non-insular connections are rejected, and we are left with a myopic survey of a few worn out acres. Clarke's stress, however, was one of cosmopolitanism. He is asserting that Australian history has as much romantic potential as other histories — he is putting it on a par with other national myths; and he is asserting that parity by stressing the international nature of that early history. Barrington starts his acting career in Ireland, reaches London's high and low life, and is transported to Sydney. Jorgenson starts his life in Denmark, travels to Australia on a surveying voyage, at one stage becomes King of Iceland, travels through Napoleonic Europe as a spy, and is finally transported to Tasmania where he commands various parties of exploration. The convicts in 'The Last of Macquarie Harbour' seize their ship and amazingly succeed in sailing it to South America and settle in Valdivia. Clarke offers a beautiful, romantic picture of their new liberty:

Spanish America is noted for the beauty of its women — the Chilean ladies are even now the belles of the seaboard — and our adventurers jumped at the offer [of settling and marrying]. The attraction of the gossip by the fountains, the chatter of the quaint old market-place, the dances by night under the orange-trees, were too strong to be resisted. The fierce black eyes of the *manolas*; for in those days there were yet *manolas* in Spain and *grisettes* in France; the more golden glory of the Malaguena, transplanted from the sultry seaport of Old Spain two generations back; the sparkling purity of the Andalusian granddaughter of some brilliant adventurer of Seville, conspired to capture the hearts of

the escaped prisoners — all honest English sensualists, I  
have no doubt. Five of them were immediately married ...  
(153–4)

The range the characters of these tales span is world-wide. John Mitchell, the Irish political transportee, is rescued from Tasmanian imprisonment by a ship sent from the USA by Irish activists there. The mutineers who seize the *Cyprus* arrive in China. Some of the castaways in 'An Australian Crusoe' return to England, others settle in America, and yet others 'proceeded to South America, and with the proceeds of the sale [of seal skins collected while awaiting rescue] formed a settlement on an island near Japan, and cultivated cotton and rice.' (184) These characters whose lives touched on Australia in her early days possessed this range of international connections. The young country was not a closed, provincial, parochial society, but part of the map of world-wide itinerants — men of fortune, buccaneers, confidence tricksters, the ceaseless tribe of the footloose.

Running through *Old Tales* are the two dominant themes of brutality and exile. The hideousness of the convict system, the cruelties of man to man and of nature to man, and the poignancy of the exile's fate, the voluntary and the transported exile, compelled by wanderlust or condemned by a brutal system. Both these themes combine in the one area of Australian detail that Clarke does give expression to — the landscape. Here he finds an image that as well as providing a naturalistic description of the Australian setting, gives metaphoric expression to his larger themes. He is still sparing in his description. He does not offer sustained, guide-book descriptions in these tales. The effect is gained by recurrent, brief reminders of the barrenness and the strangeness of the bush. For William Buckley 'death in the gloomy swamps, the fantastic underwoods, or the barren sand hills, seemed not so terrible as the death-in-life of the convict sheds.' (22–3) The final phase of the bushranger Michael Howe's life is played out against the harshness and weirdness of the bush:



Alone in the wilderness, Howe seems to have lived for some time the victim of a despairing conscience. His nature was never without a touch of rude romance, and the recollection of his crimes went far to turn his brain. In his solitary wanderings among the mountains he saw visions. Spirits appeared to him and promised him happiness. The ghosts of his victims arose, and threatened despair. He kept a journal of his dreams — a journal written with blood, on kangaroo skin. It is possible that, in a land of fruits and game, he might have lived a hermit, and died a penitent. But the barren beauty of the bush afforded no sustenance. He was compelled to descend from his hut — an eyrie built on the brink of a cataract, and surrounded by some of the sublimest scenery of the Tasmanian mountains — to plunder the farms for food and ammunition. (63)

The cruelty of the bush allies with the cruelty of the convict system. It was almost impossible for an escapee to survive. ‘The soldiers shot at any escaping convict, and if they missed him the settlement would content itself with the surety provided by sad experience, that in a few days he would return to camp, or his dead body would be brought in by some exploring party.’ (20) And the strangeness of the bush provided the constant reminder of exile.

The brutalities of the System run from the first to the last tale. The first tale is ‘The Settlement of Sydney’: ‘the voyage had taken exactly 35 weeks, and out of 112 marines His Majesty had lost but one, making up for it, however, by the death of 24 out of the 700 convicts.’ (3) The fleet arrives and ‘His Excellency made a judicious speech to the convicts, assuring them of his desire to treat them fairly and kindly.’

He was soon called upon to exercise his power. Four days after the conciliatory speech, three convicts were brought to trial. One was convicted of striking a marine with a cooper’s

adze, and received 150 lashes for his pains. Another, for theft, was marooned on an adjoining island, and kept there on bread and water for a week; while a third, sentenced to receive 50 lashes, was pardoned by the grace of the Governor. On the 28th of February a 'mutinous plot' was discovered among the convicts, who planned to steal the provisions and take to the bush. Four were arraigned, three sentenced to death, and the fourth to be flogged. Only one, however, was executed — the ringleader, Thomas Barrett, 'an old and desperate offender, who died with a hardy spirit.' He was swung off the limb of a big tree, near which were assembled the whole body of convicts, guarded by the battalion of marines. (4-5)

The last tale in the volume deals with the political prisoner, the Irishman John Mitchell. But in detailing how the political prisoners received special treatment, Clarke insists on reminding us of the miseries the regular convicts experienced.

The squatters, and even constable and gaol officials, treated 'political prisoners' with respect. When passing a chain-gang of poor devils who, failing the dignity of revolution, had earned their misery by shooting a hare or snaring a partridge, the overseers 'touched their hats' to the well-mounted, well-dressed exiles. (201)

Transportation for poaching a hare is no empty rhetoric. In 'The Seizure of the *Cyprus*' Clarke tells how Popjoy, the convict who had built the coracle that rescued the marooned party put ashore by the mutineers, 'had been transported when eleven years old for stealing a hare.' (138)

Popjoy's story is one of the many that Clarke narrates in the course of these tales. Given a pardon for saving the marooned party, Popjoy is landed in London and

cast upon the streets to find his way to gaol or starvation. Imprisoned from eleven years old, and knowing nothing save how to roll logs and cringe to the lash, the returned convict had taken to begging round the docks. Begging, like stealing, was a crime, and he was brought before the Thames Police Court. There he told the story of the mutiny and the boat-building. (139)

And unfortunately at that very time three of the *Cyprus* mutineers had returned to England — having sailed the ship to China and been sent to London by the goodwill of English merchants in China. However, suspicions about them were aroused by confusions amongst themselves over the name Swallow, who had captained the ship, had assumed. They were remanded on suspicion by the same court that heard Popjoy's case — and deductions were rapidly made. Clarke's account ends with these two tragic paragraphs, a moving record of the evil of the system and the destruction of men of such courage and resourcefulness — Swallow 'originally transported from England for rioting' who sailed the ship to China, Popjoy who built the coracle that saved the marooned party. The convict system, the economic structures, and the violence of the natural world combine.

Watt and Davis, tried as pirates and escaped felons, were hung in London. Swallow and the rest were sent back to Hobart Town. One was hung at the gaol, and the rest sent back to Hell's Gates for life. Swallow managed to escape the death penalty, and went back to the chain. Twice more he tried to escape, but in vain. At last the weight of his doom broke his spirit, and he submitted to his fate. He worked in his irons for life and died — still in yellow livery — at Port Arthur, a melancholy instance of a brave man crushed into brutality by a senseless system of punishment.

Five years later Popjoy died also. He made some

endeavour to procure a pension from the Government, and only waited the arrival of documents from Hobart Town, formally attesting his services to Lieutenant Carew, to obtain it. In the meantime he obtained a seaman's berth in a merchant-vessel, married, and seemed to have lived respectably. Coming from Quebec in a timber ship, however, he was wrecked off Boulogne. Taking to the boats, the crew made for the shore, but the sea was running with great violence, and Popjoy, with another, was washed overboard and drowned, and so never got his 'pension' after all. (139–40)

'The Rule of the Bushranger' unites Clarke's themes in one tale. The brutality of the system, the brutality that produces the further brutalities of the bushranger; and the ambiguous images of exile of Worrall and Michael Howe. Worrall, transported for life for his part in the mutiny on the *Nore*, now aged sixty, 'had set his heart upon seeing England again' and was determined to hunt down Howe for the free pardon and return passage to England that success would earn him. Worrall's campaign expresses the image of the unwilling expatriate, determined to follow through a course that will get him his return. Whereas Howe sets up a counter regime to the civil authorities — a romantic outlaw, a bandit chief who instituted 'a sort of rude court of justice, and would subject such of his band as displeased him to punishment':

He punished his men with blows and hard labour if they disobeyed him; and when one day a man named Bowles fired a blank shot over his head in jest, the chief tied him hands and foot, and blew his brains out. He compelled his adherents to take an oath of fidelity upon a (stolen) Bible, and sent insolent messages to the authorities. (57–8)

Clarke sustains an ambivalence about Howe's character. He tells us that Howe originally 'seemed tractable and good natured, though cursed

with a most pernicious love of liberty' (55) and he points out how 'the severe punishments of lash and chain urged the convicts to escape.' (53) But having escaped, Howe launches on a career of violence and murder. The most telling incident involves an ambush into which Howe and Mary, his Aboriginal girlfriend, almost fall. They try to run to safety but Mary's strength starts to fail her and she collapses.

Howe in vain commanded her to rise. The soldiers were within five hundred yards of him, and gnashing his teeth with rage, the monster drew his remaining pistol, and, taking deliberate aim at the exhausted girl, fired. He then turned, and plunged into a ravine 'where pursuit was hopeless'. (60)

But for brutality and violence, the most powerful image is one that runs through this narrative. In one ambush Whitehead, the original leader of the gang, is fatally shot. Worral sees Howe bend over his dying leader, and moves in:

but when he reached the spot the miscreant had disappeared, and there lay on the ground the mutilated trunk of Whitehead. In pursuance of an agreement made between them, Howe had hacked off his comrade's head with his clasp-knife, to prevent any person claiming the reward that was offered for it. (57)

A variation of this occurs later when Mary, not killed by Howe's bullet that was meant to silence her, but 'justly incensed at the brutality of her lover', guides the soldiers to the gang's hideout.

Now a very horrible discovery was made. Guided by the native girl, they reached a hut, in which lay a body with the head nearly severed from the trunk. 'Ay,' says Hillier: 'that's poor Peter Septon; he often said he'd cut his own throat, and

now he's done it completely.' 'No man ever cut his throat in that manner,' cries Worral. '*You* did it, you villain!' Hillier protested innocence, but a few paces further the party came upon another bleeding wretch, with his hand shattered by a bullet, and his throat partially severed. This was Collier, another bandit. 'Villain!' cries he to Hillier, 'you would have murdered me as you murdered Septon.' The black girl at this moment, seeing that the mutineer was inevitably doomed, says — 'Hillier, you killed my sister too!' (61)

The severed head serves as a frightful image of the brutalities and the betrayals. It recurs again in 'The Settler in Tasmania Fifty Years Ago' where Dr Ross, looking for a pleasant locality in which to take up land,

was met by three men, one of whom carried a blue bag on which the stains of blood were very conspicuous. Curiosity induced the party to pause, and the strangers good-naturedly opening the bag, showed them a human head.

'Taking it by the hair, he held it up to our view, with the greatest exultation imaginable.' (122–3)

It is the head of Michael Howe. Here the image has become almost comic. It serves to appal poor Dr Ross, the serious and voluntary settler, neither convict nor castaway nor compulsive adventurer. Dr Ross is a bourgeois emigrant. And Clarke is able to exercise some gently contemptuous wit at his expense. Clarke does the same thing, less gently, in 'The South Australian Bubble', the account of Gibbon Wakefield's proposals:

Cheap land makes dear labour, for the working-man who by economy and industry accumulates enough money to purchase a 'house and home', will decline to hire himself to reap those fruits which he shall not enjoy. (158)

In the atmosphere of speculation, land dealing and foppish dinner parties of 'The South Australian Bubble', the Overlanders stand out as mythic heroes from the world of those other tales. These three pieces on the bourgeoisie ('A Leaf from an Old Newspaper' is the third) serve to heighten the romance, the excitement, the vitality and the dangers of the mythic world of the other tales, providing a pallid norm by which to measure the violent world of the convicts and the bushrangers, and the poignancy and despair of the exiles and expatriates.

The floggings, the convict suicide pacts by which to escape the gaol life, the psychopathic violence of the bushrangers, the barrenness of the bush, the cruelty of the sea — these are the themes and images that run throughout the *Old Tales*. And allied with them are the images of exile — transportation, shipwreck, gaol, outlawdom. Some of the exiles are enforced by transportation; others are the product of a compulsive wanderlust. Jorgenson came to Australia twice, first as a free sailor, the second time as a convict. The romantic image of Ahasuerus, the wandering Jew, haunts the book. The wanderers who reach Australia have roamed through Ireland, England, continental Europe, North and South America, Asia, the Pacific. Some of the journeys of exile are mechanically facilitated by transportation; but the convict system with its penned, imprisoned restrictions clashes against this wandering spirit: the system in itself expressed the huge paradox — the settlement of a new world, the pushing out of new frontiers — yet a settlement, a pushing out, enforced with imprisoned pioneers. Ahasuerus's guilt finds a sort of correlative in the judicial sentences — or the crimes that the system makes its innocent victims perpetrate. Some may have been guilty, others innocent; once in the gaols and the convict ships, the distinctions are lost. 'Prisoners were treated like beasts and behaved like beasts. The lash cut the manhood out of them.' (13) Since all were forced into guilt, all became innocent; the very barbarity of the system serves to exonerate the guilt because the barbarity was so excessive. These are the themes that Clarke was working out simultaneously with these *Old Tales* in *His Natural Life*, and that receive there their most memorable expression.

Hamilton Mackinnon included none of the *Old Tales* in *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume* (1884). But in 1890 he edited *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke* and in the fifth part of that selection reprinted *Old Tales of a Young Country* in its entirety, though with the order of the tales and many of the titles changed. He also included parts two and three of Clarke's three part account of his visit to Port Arthur published in *The Argus* and *Australasian* in 1873, two pieces on William Dampier and Abel Jansen Tasman published in *The Australian School Review and Educational Advertiser* in the same year, 'The Nelson Gold Robbery' originally published as 'Avoca Sovereigns and Nelson Gold' in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 June 1879, and 'The Scotch Martyr Convicts', originally published as 'The Romance of Thomas Muir' in the *Sydney Mail*, 27 September 1879. This fifth part of the *Austral Edition* was later re-issued as a separate volume, *Stories of Australia in the Early Days*, by Hutchinson in London in 1897. It was reviewed in the *Athenaeum*, *Birmingham Gazette*, *Daily Chronicle*, *Daily Graphic*, *Dundee Courier*, *Manchester Courier*, *Newcastle Leader*, *Northern Whig* and *Western Morning News*. It went into a second edition, reviewed in *The Australasian*, 24 July 1897.<sup>243</sup>



## *His Natural Life*

In January 1870 Marcus Clarke had gone to Tasmania to research the records of the convict system for *The Australasian*. Transportation to the colonies of Britain's convicted criminals for whom there was no room in the overcrowded gaols, had been practised by Britain first of all to America (though the USA is strangely reticent about this part of its history) and later to Australia. Clarke wrote a moving, impassioned account of the horrors and sufferings of the convict system, and the articles were collected in a book, *Old Tales of a Young Country*. In it he used the phrase 'the romance of realism'. Literary commentators had complained in the 1850s that Australia had none of the charming medieval ruins of Europe and consequently it was impossible to write historical romances in the manner of Sir Walter Scott. Clarke's response was that the romances of Scott were now a thing of the past, that the contemporary mode was that of Charles Dickens, and that a realistic portrayal of human existence as it was could provide as extraordinary and exotic and exciting and emotionally moving characters and events as any romance. He demonstrated this for all time by the novel he then went on to write, a novel inspired by his historic researches into the convict system, *His Natural Life*, the first great novel of Australian literature, and a novel that remains as powerful and compelling today in its account of the horrors and brutalities of the convict settlement, as when it was first published in 1874.

*His Natural Life* first appeared as a serial in the *Australian Journal* from March 1870 to June 1872. Clarke then revised it considerably,

cutting the 370,000 word serial into a 200,000 word novel. He provided a new explanation and motivation for Richard Devine's transportation, removing the 40,000 word opening section that dealt with alchemical experiments in Europe, and the conclusion that fulfilled the alchemical theme by emerging from the Nigredo of imprisonment into the discovery of the Victorian goldfields.<sup>244</sup> Instead, the novel opens with a murder and robbery on Hampstead Heath, a site familiar to Clarke from his schooldays. He may have been making a personal allusion to past associations in England. Or he may have been making a literary allusion to a novel he admired, Henry Kingsley's *The Recollections of Geoffrey Hamlyn* (1856), in which there is a similar preparatory event before the action moves to Australia: 'poor Lord Sandstone was lying one foggy November morning on Hampstead Heath, with a bullet through his heart. Shot down ... by a brainless gambler.'<sup>245</sup>

The Irish nationalist politician Charles Gavan Duffy, at this time a member of the Victorian legislature, recalled in *My Life in Two Hemispheres* how Clarke had approached him for advice on revising the serial for book publication, and how he followed his 'suggestions for vigorous cutting', deleting Devine/Dawes's adventures before transportation and his adventures after escaping from Norfolk Island.<sup>246</sup> While according to Randolph Bedford, the lawyer Jim Moloney claimed credit for insisting that 'Rufus Dawes must die' in the revised novel.<sup>247</sup>

Two readers reported on the book to the London publisher Richard Bentley, Lady Charlotte Jackson who was unenthusiastic, and Geraldine Jewsbury who recommended publication: 'an extremely powerful and well written work, and you will do well to accept it subject to one condition.' The condition was that Rufus Dawes should survive. Clarke was willing to make the change, but in the end the English edition followed the Australian edition with Dawes drowned at sea. Geraldine Jewsbury was the long-standing and intimate friend of Jane Carlyle, and the Carlyles were long-standing friends of Gavan Duffy, who published his *Conversations with Carlyle* in 1892. Duffy, as well as helping in the revision of the novel, may also have been an influence in achieving its publication.

Certainly, in Europe at the time, he arranged for the proofs to be read by Frances Cashel Hoey, who may also have been responsible for some of the stylistic changes made in the English edition. P.D. Edwards in 'The English Publication of *His Natural Life*', quotes a letter of hers: 'What a horrid, powerful, clever, raw book his is! What admirable narrative, and ludicrously bad dialogue! What forcible language, and creaky grammar.'<sup>248</sup>

The revised book version was dedicated to Duffy. Clarke does not remark that Duffy himself had been twice imprisoned by the English for his involvement in Irish independence movements, and had more than twelve months' experience in Ireland of the interior of 'a house of correction', to quote from the dedication. But the facts were well known. Clarke's dedication of his great novel to Duffy can be seen as a proclamation of his own increasing alienation from English establishment values. In the serial version of the novel, Dawes finally returns to England. In the book version he drowns. There was no return.

The revised book version, published in 1874 by George Robertson in Melbourne, and in 1875 by Richard Bentley in London, is the version discussed here.<sup>249</sup> The longer title of the novel was not used until 1882, in the first posthumous editions of the novel issued in Australia and England; the reason and authority for this change to *For The Term of His Natural Life* are not known. The serial version edited by Stephen Murray-Smith was published in full in 1970.<sup>250</sup>

*The Bulletin* critic A.G. Stephens was rather grudging in his recognition of Clarke's achievement, suggesting that 'much of the force of *His Natural Life* must have lain *perdu* in the original records' which Clarke consulted in Tasmania.<sup>251</sup> Well, the original of every novel lies in some records or in some experience. But the skill comes in handling those materials engagingly. The English politician Lord Rosebery, visiting Australia, understood Clarke's achievement better than Stephens did. In a letter to Clarke's widow he wrote: 'the materials for great works of imagination lie all around us; but it is genius that selects and transposes them'.<sup>252</sup>

Marcus Clarke was not only a prolific journalist, he was also a novelist, committed to the art of fiction, and he read widely and enthusiastically

in both the traditional novel and in the work of contemporary fiction writers. He had gone to school together with the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins and his brother Cyril, and Cyril corresponded with Clarke in Australia and later wrote his biography. Cyril's recollections of Clarke's reading as a schoolboy, together with Clarke's letters from Australia quoted in *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*,<sup>253</sup> are an amazing insight into the extent of Clarke's familiarity with the major works of eighteenth and nineteenth century fiction. Daniel Defoe, Aphra Behn, Laurence Sterne, Mary Shelley, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Charlotte Eliza Riddell, William Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, Wilkie Collins, Bret Harte, George Sand, Anne Ritchie, Elizabeth Murray, Amelia Edwards, Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Mikhail Lermontov, Charlotte Bronte, James Payn, Henry Kingsley, Charles Lever, Charles Reade, G.A. Sala, G.A. Lawrence, and Edmund Yates were all familiar to him. His favourite novelist was Honoré de Balzac. The catalogue of Clarke's library, sold when he went bankrupt in 1874, contains a forty volume set of Balzac's work — and a huge range of works by other authors, fiction, drama, poetry and non-fiction, in English and French editions.<sup>254</sup> This was the literary context for Clarke's handling of his material.

For those who wrote about her before she was known to exist, Australia was in image a Utopia, a sort of Paradise. There was Gabriel Foigny's *La Terre Australe Connue* (1676), an account of a thirty-five-year sojourn there by a M. Sadeur amongst the androgynous natives. It is a blissful community, for hermaphroditism removes all passion, jealousy, divorce, murder, incest; their religion is deistic and rational, and with no original sin since their bi-sexual Adam had no Eve to tempt him. They are menaced only by the Fondins, a human race torn with sensuality and passions. Denis Vairasse's *The History of the Sevarites* (1675) describes a heterosexual epicurean idyll amongst the Australian natives; and Tyssot de Patot's *Voyages et aventures de Jacques Masse* (1710) has a land of polygamy, natural religion, and no divine right of kings.<sup>255</sup> The reverse of conditions in Europe, this unknown continent of the Antipodes could be imagined free from corruptions and persecutions.

The realities of the settlement shattered this image; but it continued to survive as a bitter parody of what might have been. A potential Eden had become an evil penitentiary. Mr Pounce of the civil list, one of the English establishment running the penal colony in *His Natural Life*, gives all unconsciously such a parody of the utopian and providential hopes.

This island seems specially adapted by Providence for a convict settlement; for with an admirable climate, it carries little indigenous vegetation which will support human life ... Poor Potherick used often to say that it seemed as if some Almighty Hand had planned the Penal Settlements round the coast, the country is so delightfully barren. (242)<sup>256</sup>

It is by the use of such myths as basic images for his novel, that Clarke is able to offer so much more than an historical account of the convict settlement. His account and indictment of the system is masterly. But Clarke was not simply offering a naturalistic account of a particular situation at a particular historical time and in a particular geographical context. He was also presenting a vision of human life, a vision in part and ironically drawing on the old myth of the Antipodes. As Richard Brome put it in his play *The Antipodes* (1640)

The people through the whole world of Antipodes,  
In outward feature, language, and religion,  
Resemble those to whom they are supposite:  
They under Spain appear like Spaniards,  
Under France Frenchmen, under England English,  
To the exterior show; but in their manners,  
Their carriage, and condition of life,  
Extremely contrary.<sup>257</sup>

The Antipodes traditionally represented the other side of the social coin: and that is Clarke's material. His novel deals literally with the underworld; the world beneath Europe, the other side of the globe, the bottom of the map: and the world of criminals and prisoners (not necessarily synonymous), the underworld of society that England

preferred not to know about and to dispose of. In his depiction of the penal colony Clarke offers a counter picture of English society in its systems of authority, oppression and brutalisation. The officers, the guards, the clergy, the innocent and the guilty prisoners, and the free settlers, comprise a full social range. But it is a society that is the reverse image of the official picture of early Victorian England: here the convicts are not conveniently shipped away, here the underworld is the dominant concern of the society. Here the systems of authority of England reveal themselves in explicit brutality. The particular circumstances of this underworld allow man's 'natural life' to emerge without any of the inhibiting restraints of European society. The Antipodes here represent not the ideal state that man, freed from European society, might aspire to, but its reverse, the brutality that, implicit in European society, he will quickly sink to if allowed. William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) offers in its inversion of R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) a similar anti-utopian rewriting of a perfectibility myth.

Although as the novel's title suggests Clarke is offering from the particular historical details a general account of human nature, it is as a realistic recreation of the system, the transportation of convicts and their treatment in the penal settlements, that *His Natural Life* is initially striking. There is a prologue to the novel set in England presenting the cause of the hero's, Rufus Dawes's, transportation; there is an epilogue in which we see his dead body floating at sea. But the novel proper begins and ends with Dawes as a convict suffering the system. And though some of the other convicts escape and their adventures provide a relief from the settlements, they are always recaptured and return to this prison world. Stephen Knight in his *Continent of Mystery*, a study of Australian crime fiction, argues that *His Natural Life* is a work of crime fiction.<sup>258</sup> It certainly opens with a murder and the protagonist is sentenced, unjustly, to transportation. Crime themes are there, including the episodes involving John Rex's imposture of Richard Devine which draws on the famous contemporary Tichborne case, in which a butcher from Wagga Wagga claimed to be the missing heir to a titled family.<sup>259</sup> But essentially it is a

prison novel, or a novel of the convict system, as Clarke indicates in the dedication of the novel to Sir Gavan Duffy, setting the literary context:

The convict of fiction has been hitherto shown only at the beginning or at the end of his career. Either his exile has been the mysterious end to his misdeeds, or he has appeared upon the scene to claim interest by reason of an equally unintelligible love of crime acquired during his experience in a penal settlement. Charles Reade has drawn the interior of a house of correction in England, and Victor Hugo has shown how a French convict fares after the fulfilment of his sentence. But no writer — so far as I am aware — has attempted to depict the dismal condition of a felon during his term of transportation.<sup>260</sup>

Clarke was at pains to suggest the authenticity of the appalling, unbelievable brutalities that are the material of his novel. A sensationalist manner might well have invalidated the serious indictment of the convict system. And in his Preface he stresses his seriousness, for although transportation had stopped altogether in 1868 in Australia, the French had just established the system in New Caledonia. Devil's Island, indeed, was not closed until 1952. In writing *His Natural Life* Clarke carefully examined documentary sources, visited the scenes of his story, and spoke to prisoners at Port Arthur.<sup>261</sup> A note to the final chapter of the serial version of *His Natural Life* assured readers

Mr. Clarke has prepared an appendix, which will be published when *His Natural Life* is issued in a volume from the press. This appendix will give incontestable authorities for all statements made in this work concerning convict discipline.<sup>262</sup>

The appendix duly appeared, and further sources have since been

recorded.<sup>263</sup> Certainly, to say that Clarke provided this sort of annotation does not necessarily acquit him of the charge of sensationalism. G.A. Wilkes, for instance, remarks that 'The account of the brutalities of the convict system verges on the sensational' noting that 'as most of the episodes can be documented, it is only the aggregation of them that produces a melodramatic effect'.<sup>264</sup> But it is important to note that these aggregated brutalities are not all suffered by Dawes. Clarke is careful not to give his main character an impossible or unreal load. The brutalities Dawes endures are intermingled with other atrocities perpetrated on other convicts, suffered by other victims: Kirkland raped and flogged to death, cannibalism, child suicides. The aggregation of brutalities is not achieved by the impossible focus of them on to one man. This is one of the precautions that Clarke takes against melodramatic excesses. Another is the avoidance of sensationalism in the specific brutalities. In the description of the flogging to death of young Kirkland, Clarke supplies sufficient detail to nauseate:

The white back was instantly striped with six crimson bars. Kirkland stifled a cry. It seemed to him that he had been cut in half ...

The third blow sounded as though it had been struck upon a piece of raw beef, and the crimson turned purple ...

After the tenth stroke

the lad's back, swollen into a hump now, presented the appearance of a ripe peach which a wilful child had scored with a pin. Dawes, turning away from his bloody handiwork, drew the cats through his fingers twice. They were beginning to get clogged a little. (283)

But Clarke does not enumerate each stroke, nor does he offer any further description until the fifty-sixth. He establishes the beginning and



the end of the flogging nauseatingly enough. But after the fifty-sixth stroke he offers no more: 'His back was like a bloody sponge, while, in the interval between the lashes, the swollen flesh twitched like that of a new-killed bullock' (284). After this, Clarke spares us further detail and lets Kirkland die unnoticed. He diverts attention to Dawes who has been doing the flogging: the system in the penal camps was to make one convict flog another — a refinement in tortures, a planned demoralisation. Dawes, having refused to flog Kirkland any more, is flogged himself: and the emphasis here is not on the physical but on the mental torture. We can take that much more readily.

I shall not attempt here to enumerate the variety or the extent of the tortures the British penal system imposed. The prison camps are fully established, and to add to the horrors, an addition emphasising the hopelessness yet avoiding the numbing monotony that a mere succession of floggings would produce on the reader, Clarke shows how the alternatives to imprisonment are worse than prison. For the bush provided no sustenance for escapees. The fate of one group who attempt to escape is described with frightful authenticity:

On the seventh day, Bodenham says his feet are so bad he can't walk, and Greenhill, with a greedy look at the berries, bids him stay behind. Being in a very weak condition he takes his companion at his word, and drops off about noon the next day. Gabbett, discovering this defection, however, goes back, and in an hour or so appears, driving the wretched creature before him with blows, as a sheep is driven to the shambles. Greenhill remonstrates at another mouth being thus forced upon the party, but the giant silences him with a hideous glance. Jemmy Vetch remembers that Greenhill accompanied Gabbett once before, and feels uncomfortable. He gives hint of his suspicions to Sanders, but Sanders only laughs. It is horribly evident that there is an understanding among the three. (356)

The horror is established by the unmentioned, unmentionable forebodings of Jemmy Vetch. By implication we know what to expect. Earlier in the novel the partially dismembered body of someone who escaped with Gabbett has been seen, though it provoked no explicit remark. The unspoken exerts its pregnant force. And the urgency, the immediacy, are built up by Clarke's use of the present tense. We read on, hoping for a past tense that will declare the whole episode finished and distanced. But no past tense is allowed until the decision to kill is reached.

Said Greenhill, in the course of a dismal conversation, 'I am so weak that I could eat a piece of a man.'

On the tenth day Bodenham refuses to stir, and the others, being scarce able to drag along their limbs, sit on the ground about him. Greenhill, eyeing the prostrate man, said, slowly, 'I have seen the same done before, boys, and it tasted like pork.' (357)

And here Greenhill's 'said' and his seemingly hyperbolic, casual statement mark the end of the suspense. Again the effect is gained by the avoidance of explicitness, by avoiding naming the horror contemplated and soon performed. The only explicit mention of eating human flesh seems a casual comment in a description of hunger; like 'I could eat a horse'. When the plan is finally proposed, the action is not named, but skirted round with 'the same' and 'it'. I have used the phrase 'frightful authenticity' deliberately. For, as his notes tell, Clarke has drawn here upon the 'Deposition of Alexander Pierce and official statements of trial and execution of Pierce and Cox for murder and cannibalism' (471). Pierce stated in his deposition: 'Bob Greenhill was the first who introduced it, and said he had seen the like done before, and that it eat much like a little pork.' The horror comes from hearing the way men spoke of this, from an explicitly direct transcription of the real language of men, the genuine avoidance of naming the horror. Clarke's only significant alteration is to insert the vocative 'boys', which by suggesting both an

innocent youthfulness and by the appeal of 'we're all in this together', an appeal to a brotherhood of men to eat a brother, subtly emphasises the horror of the situation. To select from this chapter is to offer only a part of its power, and to lose the cumulative suspense, the awful, inevitable following through of the cannibalism of the party, one by one:

Sanders, seeing them approach, knew his end was come, and submitted, crying, 'Give me half an hour to pray for myself.' They consent, and the bewildered wretch knelt down and folded his hands like a child. His big, stupid face worked with emotion. His great cracked lips moved in desperate agony. He wagged his head from side to side, in pitiful confusion of his brutalized senses.

'I can't think o' the words, Jem!'

'Pah,' snarled the cripple, swinging the axe, 'we can't starve here all night.'

Four days had passed, and the two survivors of this awful journey sat watching each other. (359)

I pointed in the previous quotation to Clarke's addition of the word 'boys' to the authentic statement from the deposition, and suggested this was deliberately suggesting a youthful innocence. Describing brutal, now cannibal, convicts, the comment may have sounded absurd. Yet in this last quotation, Clarke insists on Sanders's being a 'bewildered wretch', praying by folding his hands 'like a child', he emphasises his 'big, stupid face' and in characterising his murderer, chooses to refer to him as 'the cripple'. What Clarke is doing is emphasising the moral innocence of these depraved creatures: he insists, often enough for any Victorian readers, on their being depraved. But he stresses here, in his most hideous chapter, in describing one of the most bestial episodes in his novel, the childishness, the stupidity, the ignorance of his characters. These men, his language suggests, are more victims than anything else, and they are slaughtered like dumb beasts: 'as a sheep is driven to the shambles'. The

emphasis is not on their moral culpability, but on their ignorance, on their simplicity, on their suffering — Vetch born a cripple — and on what they have suffered in society. Sanders is ‘in pitiful confusion of his brutalized senses’: brutalized, not brutal — his depravity is not innate but imposed upon him, by society, by the penal system. The horrors Clarke describes are the horrors of man’s natural life — the accidents of birth, the forces of society. These are not the volitional evils of the free choosing mind.

Passing by such episodes as the two twelve-year-old children in the special children’s penitentiary who jump to death over a cliff rather than live, I will move on to mention only one further example of the system. Again, Clarke draws on factual sources, and again he deals with the episode with a restraint that adds an inexorable force to it. It is the final expression of the hell of the convict settlement, the search for the only possible escape. It involves Dawes and two other convicts, Bland, and Blind Mooney ‘who had arrived in Sydney fifty-seven years before, in the year 1789, and when he was transported he was fourteen years old’. Clarke makes no explicit comment on the year’s being also the year of the French revolution. He leaves it as one of his unemphasised ironies. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity were a long way from Australia.

The scheme of escape hit upon by the convict intellect was simply this. Three men being together, lots were drawn to determine whom should be murdered. The drawer of the longest straw was the ‘lucky’ man. He was killed. The drawer of the next longest straw was the murderer. He was hanged. The unlucky one was the witness. He had, of course, an excellent chance of being hung also, but his doom was not so certain, and he therefore looked upon himself as unfortunate. (418)

Again the restraint, the detached manner of narration, makes the horror more telling. Clarke uses a similar detachment of manner in his scrupulousness about the precise months and years, and about

geographical accuracy. This both emphasises the documentary aspect of the book, and underlines the horror. Book I ends on a newspaper cutting 'extracted from the *Hobart Town Courier* of the 12th November, 1827'; indeed the whole chapter consists of this one brief paragraph (81). It is entitled, objectively, 'A Newspaper Paragraph', and the opening chapter of the next book is called, with similar, unemotional, dispassionate factual objectivity, 'The Topography of Van Diemen's Land' (82). But the human aspects of punishment and suffering suppressed by these seemingly objective historical and geographical chapter headings, are drawn attention to all the more forcefully by that very suppression for the contents of those chapters are facts that cannot be divorced from any humane or emotional response. The newspaper paragraph tells how the innocent Dawes has, with three others, been sentenced to death, and then reprieved to a sentence of six years' penal servitude; and the topography of Van Diemen's Land is the topography of the 'natural penitentiary'.

Clarke's recording of the atrocities of a not far distant past, turning court records and royal commissions into imaginative fiction, was a major achievement. L.L. Robson has argued that Dawes's experiences were untypical: 'No more than approximately fifteen per cent of prisoners were ever sent to a penal settlement, and most convicts were not flogged. Usually men secured a ticket of leave within three years and this enabled them to work for themselves provided they reported regularly to the police.'<sup>265</sup> But it does not at all follow, as some Australian commentators have implied, that because *His Natural Life* deals with someone treated as a hardened offender rather than with the typical, that it is a false account of the system. A system that can perpetrate these atrocities on only one man is an evil system, and far more than one man suffered under the system.

But I want to turn now from the socio-historical to the personal, to the story of Rufus Dawes, the novel's protagonist, and to the wider implications of the title. The novel opens with a sensational tableau. Lady Devine has just revealed that her son is not the child of Sir Richard Devine but the product of her adultery with Lord Bellasis and Wotton.

Whereupon Sir Richard turns the young Richard Devine, whom he has been arraigning, anyway, for dissipation, out of the house. That night Richard, having encountered Sir Richard striding past him wild-eyed on Hampstead Heath, immediately comes upon the body of Lord Bellasis, his real father. He has just identified Lord Bellasis by examining his wallet when he is apprehended and taken to the police. Believing Sir Richard killed Bellasis, Richard says nothing lest his mother's adultery should be made public. He assumes a false name, Rufus Dawes, and is transported for theft, for Lord Bellasis's wallet had been emptied. Sir Richard dies of a stroke almost immediately on arriving home. Lady Devine never suspects that Dawes is in fact her son. She is led to believe Richard set sail for India on a ship that is later destroyed by fire.

The Prologue does not augur well for a naturalistic novel. It serves to get Dawes, as he is henceforth known, transported, but it introduces problems by insisting on Dawes's innocence. This, more than the succession of punishments meted out to him later, militates against his possessing any typicality or representativeness. No doubt there were many innocent people convicted and transported: that is not the issue. What creates the problems for the modern reader is Dawes's initial attitude. The hideous and brutal conditions on board the transport ship predispose us to react against the authorities responsible for such conditions. Consequently we encounter some difficulty when Dawes tells the ship's doctor of a mutiny that he has overheard being planned. This seems a falsification of what a convict on a ship like that would do. The novel seems to lose authenticity as a convict novel by having as its protagonist a 'goody'. Distinguished from the other convicts by his innocence, reporting the planned mutiny to the authorities, Dawes seems the weak product of bourgeois sentimentalism.

But to make such a judgment is to replace a Victorian sentimentalism with its twentieth-century equivalent, an over-readiness to assume immediate sympathy with the imprisoned and guilty. It is important for Clarke's scheme that he should draw his readers gently towards a position of sympathy with the convicts — not plunge them immediately

into a sympathy that would be strongly resisted and rejected. It is also important that Dawes should be innocent and on the side of authority at the beginning; after all, he has been brought up as a member of the English ruling class who established the transportation system and who mete out the justice. It is the purpose of Clarke's narrative to show the breakdown of Dawes's class loyalties; to show the breakdown in his belief in the worth of honesty, innocence, goodness in the context of the system. He becomes in the end distinguishable from the other convicts only in being more hardened, more unregenerate. The system is calculated not to produce any reformation, not to develop the good or socially useful or any other worthwhile characteristics of its convicts: Dawes's nature is composed initially of altruism, self-sacrifice — his shielding of his mother's name stresses this. But by herding together all manner of criminals, all that is produced is an increase in criminality, cruelty, bestiality, hostility to all social values. Dawes begins as innocent, and as a model of certain sorts of honour: he ends up in his attitudes (though not his actions) one of the most hardened of the criminals, someone in whom any traces of his earlier sensitivity, any past support for the authorities, any social instinct has been utterly extinguished. And this is, Clarke emphasises, a result of the system. On board ship 'the more guilty boasted of their superiority in vice; the petty criminals swore that their guilt was blacker than it appeared' (13). The innocent and guilty alike are immersed in deeper depravity. Captain Vickers, the officer in charge of the Tasmanian penal settlement (a fine portrait of a man coping with his office by going by the rule book, by simply carrying out orders and so hoping to block out any moral qualms) later remarks "But imagine an innocent man condemned to this place!" "I can't", said Frere, with a laugh. "Innocent man, be hanged! They're all innocent, if you'd believe their own stories." (101). And with an obvious irony of juxtaposition, they go on to discuss Dawes. It is an important exchange, not only in its obvious but in its subtler ironies. Frere's careless oath 'Innocent men, be hanged' is full of bitter, ambiguous significance: for the innocent are hanged; the oath is appropriately from the brutal Frere also an imperative. And when Frere

goes on to say 'They're all innocent, if you'd believe their own stories', he unconsciously voices what Clarke establishes as a truth in the novel. In the context of those dreadful punishments, and of the guilt of their judges and warders, of the society condemning them and of the Freres running the system, the convicts are all innocent.

The mutiny is quelled, and its ringleaders name Dawes as one of them. On arrival in Hobart he is sentenced to six years' penal servitude, and three attempts are made on his life for exposing the mutiny; defending himself leads to his being put in chains for brawling. After unsuccessful attempts at escape he is condemned to solitary imprisonment on an isolated rock in the harbour. In despair he jumps, weighted by his chains, into the sea.

But at this stage his will is not utterly destroyed; with the later suicide pact he reaches his lowest point. Here, the shock of the water provokes an immediate reflex to survive and he swims. On the deserted shore he later comes across Mrs Vickers and her daughter Sylvia, Lieutenant Frere, and two others; the penal settlement has been closed down and on the last ship to leave there has been a successful mutiny. The convicts have put ashore this party. And now, after his attempted suicide, Dawes makes a determined effort to save the group. He swam not by any primary volitional decision but by an instinctive reaction, counter to his will, when he struck the water. But now his will is revived by the child, Sylvia, and he regains some social spirit, he begins to cooperate with and help others.

Rufus Dawes was no longer the brutalized wretch who had plunged into the dark waters of the bay to escape a life he loathed, and had alternately cursed and wept in the solitudes of the forests. He was an active member of society — a society of four — and he began to regain an air of independence and authority. This change had been wrought by the influence of little Sylvia. Recovered from the weakness consequent upon this terrible journey, Rufus Dawes had experienced for the first time in six years the



soothing power of kindness. He had now an object to live for beyond himself. He was of use to somebody, and had he died, he would have been regretted. (152)

In Clarke's notation, such a voluntary social participation is one of the positive values of human life; it is in contrast with the norms of the penal settlements, where there is either enforced participation in an activity, the result of force and brutality; or there is the perverted cooperation of the cannibalism episode; or there is the destruction of the human social spirit, the transforming of it into despair, hatred, uselessness, isolation. Dawes now responds to this new situation by building a coracle to escape from the deserted settlement before starvation overcomes them all. The details of the construction make a marvellous section in the Robinson Crusoe tradition. But against the naturalistic authenticity that establishes the resourcefulness and resilience of the human spirit, are set the equally naturalistic reminders of the realities of the penal system. 'Tell me', Dawes asks little Sylvia, laughingly, the coracle in progress,

'what will you do for me if I bring you and mamma safe home again?'

'Give you a free pardon,' says Sylvia, 'and papa shall make you his servant.'

Frere burst out laughing at this reply; and Dawes, with a choking sensation in his throat, put the child upon the ground, and walked away. (166)

It is one of the most poignant moments in the novel, the sudden switch from the prospect of escape, from joy and excitement, to this awful, unthinking dashing of the mood. 'This was in truth all he could hope for.' (166) Yet despite this, Dawes retains his will to live and his will to save others.

But this regeneration<sup>266</sup> of Dawes, so powerfully and so practically established by his building the coracle, serves only to emphasise his

further, subsequent destruction. For when after days at sea a passing ship sights the coracle, Frere, jealous of Sylvia's admiration of Dawes, and contemptuous and envious of the convict, snatches Sylvia from Dawes's arms, and says that he, Frere, built the coracle and saved them all from Dawes's murderous designs. Mrs Vickers dies from exposure on that arduous journey, Sylvia loses her memory from the trauma of the voyage. Frere is believed. Dawes is sent as a prisoner for life to the Hobart penal settlement. "Of what use to society," asked the *Gazette*, quite pathetically, "has this scoundrel been during the last eleven years?" And everybody agreed that he had been of no use whatever.' (216)

Dawes is later transferred from Hobart to Norfolk Island, the worst of all settlements, where he runs a mafia-like organisation called the Ring. Frere marries Sylvia, and becomes commander of Norfolk Island. A new chaplain, the Reverend North, an alcoholic, arrives at Norfolk Island and falls in love with Sylvia, whom he plans to take away from Frere whom she has come to hate. John Rex, the ringleader of the mutiny, having been recaptured in England, escapes again and returns to England where he assumes Rufus Dawes' original identity of Richard Devine, and because of a striking physical resemblance succeeds in taking over Devine's inheritance. But Rex's mistress, whom he abandoned after she had planned his escape, discovers that he is in England, finds him and takes him back to Australia with her, under threat of exposing him as an escaped convict. In the course of these various events, certain remarkable coincidences emerge.

Richard Devine (Dawes) we know from the beginning was the illegitimate son of Lord Bellasis. Maurice Frere, the persecutor of Dawes throughout his imprisonment, is Richard Devine's cousin, and Sir Richard, upon the revelation of Richard's illegitimacy, planned to change his will in favour of Frere, but died of a stroke before doing so. The chaplain North was the young parson whom Lord Bellasis was waiting to meet when he was murdered. North later explains to Dawes when he discovers (as Frere never does) that Dawes is Devine:

I was to meet Lord Bellasis ... to pay the money and receive the bills. When I saw him fall I galloped up, but instead of pursuing his murderer I rifled his pocket-book of my forgeries. (456)

North, in debt for gambling, had given Bellasis two forged bills of exchange. Lionel Crofton, who was with Bellasis just before the murder, was John Rex under an assumed name. And John Rex turns out to be another illegitimate son of Lord Bellasis: hence his resemblance to Dawes — they are half-brothers. Rex (as Crofton) was the murderer of Bellasis. The crime for which Dawes was transported — robbery, and suspicion of murder — was the joint work of North and Rex. North goes to the settlement to assuage his guilt for not having spoken up at Dawes's trial. Rex is transported for another offence and becomes ringleader of the mutinies and, along with Frere, Dawes's other black angel.

Viewed realistically, these coincidences are absurd: and many critics have commented adversely on the novel as a result of them.<sup>267</sup> And since the historical portrayal of the convict system is done with such a careful and insistent documentary realism, the temptation to read the novel as wholly naturalistic is great. But the coincidences have a role other than of providing sensational revelations and of providing some structural neatness to what might have been a rambling narrative. The familial connections of the characters offer a basis for a reading of the novel at a different level from the historical naturalistic. The blood relationship of Dawes and Rex allows for some significant paralleling of their lives. Their similarities are pointed by their both assuming false names for important parts of their lives — though with a major difference. Rex operates pseudonymously, as Skinner, as Crofton, when he is free, but is imprisoned under his own name; whereas Dawes assumes his false name for captivity, surrendering his real name upon arrest. Though it is not, of course, a name that is really his, since he is not the son of Sir Richard Devine, but of Bellasis. But the important parallel between Rex and Dawes is their physical resemblance, their being half-brothers, both

illegitimate sons of Bellasis. Clarke pairs these half-brothers throughout his novel as alter egos. Rex is the guilty equivalent of Dawes. He is the professional criminal, the half-brother who committed the crime which resulted in Dawes's imprisonment. Rex, with his mutinies, his escapes, features largely in the novel. His will to escape is the converse of Dawes's behaviour: while Rex escapes from Norfolk Island, Dawes joins in the suicide pact, the murder lottery. It was Rex's mutiny plan that Dawes revealed at the beginning of the novel. These are the contrasts — but there are also similarities: Rex's life in London under Devine's name is the sort of dissipated life Dawes/Devine had led before, and which had caused the initial confrontation with his 'father' that had provoked the revelation of his illegitimacy. Stressing the identity of these two figures, half-brothers, Clarke has built into his novel these two striking alternatives. The objection to having the novel's protagonist an innocent figure, is met by having the undoubtedly guilty alter ego of Rex balancing Dawes throughout. These are the alternatives of 'his natural life', the two possibilities for the same person.

They are not the only possibilities. The other figure whose career parallels Dawes's throughout, whose life offers an alternative to the same set of events and locations, is Maurice Frere, the most brutal of the officers, who finally becomes commander of Norfolk Island. Again there is a familial connection: Dawes and Frere are cousins. It is not — because of Dawes's illegitimacy — a blood relationship, but a social one. But the lack of blood connection is balanced for the novel's metaphoric pattern by that significant name, Frere, French for brother. And the name also expresses the nature of this alternative — it is pronounced 'freer'. He is the free alternative to the captive Dawes:

the coarse red-faced Frere, who was noted for his fondness for low society, and overbearing, almost brutal demeanour. No one denied, however, that Captain Frere was a valuable officer. It was said that, in consequence of his tastes, he knew more about the tricks of convicts than any man on

the island. It was said, even, that he was wont to disguise himself, and mix with the pass-holders and convict servants, in order to learn their signs and mysteries. When in charge at Bridgewater it had been his delight to rate the chain-gangs in their own hideous jargon, and to astound a newcomer by his knowledge of his previous history. The convict population hated and cringed to him, for, with his brutality and violence, he mingled a ferocious good humour, that resulted sometimes in tacit permission to go without the letter of the law. Yet, as the convicts themselves said, 'a man was never safe with the Captain'; for, after drinking and joking with them, as the Sir Oracle of some public-house whose hostess he delighted to honour, he would disappear through a side door just as the constables burst in at the back, and show himself as remorseless, in his next morning's sentence of the captured, as if he had never entered a tap-room in all his life. (198–9)

Frere is presented not simply as a hypocrite, or a liar, or a sadist, or an authoritarian punishing in others those corruptions he loves himself. These are all components of his personality; but the particular strength of his portrayal is in the indication of his closeness to the convicts. He is tied to them by similar tastes — he has had, significantly, a liaison with Rex's mistress — and he is tied to them in the brutal exercise of his authority. Without a Dawes to persecute, Frere would be lost. He has no other interests, his horizons are bounded by the convict world in which he lives, he is as much a prisoner as the prisoners. And, in a terrible way, the prisoners are dependent on him and admire the authority he wields. On one occasion one of the convicts seizes the pistol from Frere's belt. 'But Kavanagh did not fire. At the instant when his hand was on the pistol, he looked up and met the magnetic glance of Frere's imperious eyes.' And Kavanagh 'thrust the weapon, cocked as it was' back into Frere's belt.

Frere slowly drew one hand from his pocket, took the cocked pistol and levelled it at his recent assailant. 'That's the best chance *you'll* ever get, Jack,' said he.

Kavanagh fell on his knees. 'For God's sake, Captain Frere!'

Frere looked down on the trembling wretch, and then uncocked the pistol, with a laugh of ferocious contempt. 'Get up, you dog,' he said. 'It takes a better man than you to best me. Bring him up in the morning, Hawkins, and we'll give him five-and-twenty.'

As he went out — so great is the admiration for Power — the poor devils in the yard cheered him. (315–16)

Frere and the convicts are attached to each other by this frightful bondage, this cruel brotherhood. Clarke emphasises that this is not a one-sided attachment. Frere is bound by his sadism and authoritarianism to his victims; the convicts are bound to him by their admiration for power, by the servility of their defeated wills.

On the societal level Clarke is pointing to a bond and to a similarity between Frere and his ilk, and the convicts. This is significantly imaged in a fight between Frere and Gabbett that ends the first mutiny. It is emphasised that they are equally matched and Frere wins only because a chance lurch of the ship off-balances Gabbett. Their parity of strength, of physical violence is given an additional meaning when Gabbett later practises cannibalism. But Clarke is also suggesting in the Dawes-Frere relationship the two psychological oppositions of man's natural life — the persecutory and the suffering. Even Dawes, the most hardened of the convicts by the novel's end, cannot strike Frere. North records an incident in his diary in which Frere entered the gaol yard:

I saw a dozen pair of eyes flash hatred, but the bull-dog courage of the man overawed them here, as, I am told, it had done in Sydney. It would have been easy to kill him

then and there, and his death, I am told, is sworn among them; but no one raised a finger. The only man who moved was Rufus Dawes, and he checked himself instantly. Frere, with a recklessness of which I did not think him capable, stepped up to this terror of the prison, and ran his hands lightly down his sides, as is the custom with constables when 'searching' a man. Dawes — who is of a fierce temper — turned crimson at this bravado, and, I thought, would have struck him, but he did not. (393)

Dawes is inevitably set in the role of victim to Frere's persecutions. Similarly with Dawes and Rex, Clarke contrasts moral innocence with moral culpability, the will to survive with the drift towards suicide. Dawes, Rex and Frere are all in one way or another 'brothers' — they together embody three different aspects of man's natural life.

But all three ways end similarly. None of these three possibilities is a possibility of freedom. At the end of the novel Dawes leaves Norfolk Island on the ship on which North was planning to go away with Sylvia. It is not a positive move towards freedom — his concern is not to escape (his will for that has been broken) but to save Sylvia from North. The ship is destroyed in a cyclone, and both Sylvia and Dawes die. Frere, wifeless, remains bound to his convict charges on Norfolk Island. Rex is brought back to Australia by his mistress and remains her prisoner. North suicides. No one escapes. Each 'natural life' leads to the same blankness. It is a novel of the most powerful, most hopeless despair.

The coincidences are not the mere trappings of sensation and convenience. Rather, they offer the mechanism, they allow a familial metaphor, for an exploration of the irresolvable aspects of human society, of the human psyche: Devine's altruistic sacrifice, Rex's murder, Frere's brutal exercise of authority, Rex's indomitable will, Dawes's despair, Frere's callous possessiveness of Sylvia, Dawes's hopeless love. Clarke split these human characteristics amongst his cast of characters, gaining in fullness what he lost in complexity. And the complexity is there if we

follow through the lives of Rex, Dawes and Frere as interrelated figures. Certainly Dawes is the obvious hero of the novel, the good protagonist. But the novel's title is undefining in its pronoun: *His Natural Life*. It could apply equally to Frere and to Rex as well as to Dawes; it applies to them all, for all are aspects of man's natural life.

And the relationship of the familial connections to the events of the Prologue offers a meaning beyond that of simple sensationalism. Both Rex and Dawes are involved in this initial incident of the killing of the father. Rex kills Bellasis, his father, who is also Dawes's father, and Dawes's assumed father is killed with the shock of Bellasis's death. Dawes, who has every motive to kill his supposed father (his anger, to protect his mother, to preserve his inheritance) does not do so: but his supposed father nonetheless dies — as if the wish were sufficient — and Dawes is punished because he is suspected of robbing and killing his real father. Rex performs the Oedipal act; but his half-brother Dawes (whose protection of his mother is neatly Oedipal), though keeping his hands clean of bloodshed, is punished and treated as if he had in fact killed his father. The separation of motives, attitudes and responsibilities is similar to Fyodor Dostoyevsky's later treatment of the theme in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1879–80).

The psychological interest here can also be directed outwards to a social significance. The initial parricide is the cause of Dawes's transportation, of leaving the old country and going to the settlement. And this initial symbolic action can be related to the trauma of the colonial experience. Brian Elliott in a lecture on Clarke<sup>268</sup> has seen Dawes's love for Sylvia, the child brought up in the colony, away from England, as the central image of the novel. In Dawes's rejection by and of the old world and his clinging to and protecting this fragile infant despite every hindrance, Elliott sees an image of the colonial experience. But Sylvia, though a regenerative image and inspiration for Dawes, is an inspiration all for nothing. She can provide no fulfilment for Dawes, any more than Australia did for Clarke. He went to Australia when his father died, leaving him at sixteen without the inheritance he had expected. He died there, bankrupt for the



second time, aged thirty-five. Much of his experience of the colony was of frustration, sickness, financial anxiety, misery. The killing of the father at the beginning of *His Natural Life* is an event bringing on misery for all the main characters of the novel. Once the societal taboos and values of the old world are broken away from, then the 'natural life' breaks out unchecked. The brutality of Frere, the homosexual rape and flogging to death of Kirkland, Gabbett's cannibalism — is this man's natural life? There seems no fulfilment; the hopeless expiation of North produces only suicide, Dawes's protection of his mother's name produces a lifetime's imprisonment. Clarke takes a hopeless view of the colonial experience, of the conversion of the Antipodean paradise into a natural penitentiary. The settlement is blighted by the guilt of the initial Oedipal killing. The characters are all guilt ridden — North's remorse and hopeless expiation of his failure to speak at the trial, Frere's guilt at his lie about the coracle and his fear Sylvia will remember one day. And though Dawes has nothing to be guilty of, his motivation, to protect his mother's guilt, is related: is it an expiation by proxy of her guilt, an expiation for wanting his father's or supposed father's death, a sexual trauma at the realization of his illegitimacy? Sylvia, of course, is notably innocent and guilt free: but fearful every time she encounters Dawes, fearful of something she cannot remember. Guilt becomes a major theme for the novel's mood, related to the initial Oedipal killing, and appropriate for the story of a colonization founded on the convict system.

*His Natural Life*, rarely if ever out of print, has remained perennially popular despite mixed critical responses. Early twentieth century critics hailed it as the only masterpiece of Australian fiction, 1930s nationalist commentators objected to its focus on the convict system which they saw as a perpetuation of English stereotypes about Australia, while mid-twentieth century academics objected to the coincidences and the alleged improbabilities and excessive sufferings. But later studies have demonstrated the literary sophistication of Clarke's art, and shown the documentary reality of the researched historical materials.

## *Chidiock Tichbourne*

The Tichborne case provided Marcus Clarke with the material of John Rex's impersonation of Richard Devine in *His Natural Life*. Arthur Orton, a butcher from Wagga Wagga, had claimed to be the long lost Roger Tichborne and Lady Tichborne was convinced that he indeed was her son. His case to prove his identity and entitlement to the estate collapsed in 1872, and at a further trial in 1874 he was convicted of perjury. *His Natural Life* exploited the publicity accorded the trial by offering a certain *roman à clef* interest. And for his next novel, *Chidiock Tichbourne*, Clarke picked up the Tichborne name, now spelled Tichbourne, no doubt hoping it would lure readers.<sup>269</sup> Possibly Clarke himself had been lured by it while browsing through Isaac D'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature*, a copy of which is listed in his library catalogue.<sup>270</sup> For D'Israeli's item on the sixteenth century Catholic conspirator, whose name he spells Titchbourne, was clearly the historical basis for Clarke's romance.<sup>271</sup> D'Israeli wrote:

Chidiock Titchbourne is a name which appears in the conspiracy of Anthony Babington against Elizabeth, and the history of this accomplished young man may enter into the romance of real life. Having discovered two interesting domestic documents relative to him, I am desirous of preserving a name and a character, which have such claims on our sympathy.

The two documents D'Israeli had discovered were Tichbourne's letter to his wife and the verses he wrote the night before his execution. Clarke reprints them verbatim from D'Israeli's essay.

Clarke also borrowed more indiscriminately. His description of the execution of the Catholic conspirators shows all the horrors that might be expected of the author of *His Natural Life*. Though as with *His Natural Life* there remains a certain restraint; we expect a crescendo of nausea, but after the brief statement of the disembowelling of Ballard the execution is given no further detail. The effect is achieved by a simple sentence: 'It was half an hour before he died'; our imagination can work on the detail we have already been given.

Ballard was first executed and snatched alive from the gallows. The assistant executioner a man named Barefoot seeing him alive and praying, hesitated. The mob pulled at the rope and flung the Jesuit on his back. Barefoot then fell to work to disembowel Ballard, the unhappy priest being so present to himself as to make the sign of the cross with one hand. The others fell on their knees praying.

When the headsman began his tremendous office upon Babington the young man cried *Parce mihi Domine Jesu* and was then silent. It was half an hour before he died. (305–6)

As in *His Natural Life* Clarke has adapted authenticated reports into his fiction. D'Israeli wrote

I must not refrain from painting this scene of blood; the duty of an historian must be severer than his taste, and I record in the note a scene of this nature. The present one was full of horrors. Ballard was first executed, and snatched alive from the gallows to be disembowelled: Babington looked on with an undaunted countenance, steadily gazing on

that variety of tortures which he himself was in a moment to pass through; the others averted their faces, fervently praying. When the executioner began his tremendous office on Babington, the spirit of this haughty and heroic man cried out amidst the agony, *Parce mihi, Domine Jesu!* Spare me, Lord Jesus! (257–8)

However, the authenticity here is compromised by a certain carelessness. Clarke absorbs, from an illustrative footnote D'Israeli appended to his account, the name and actions of the executioner Barefoot who lived sixty years after the events of the novel. The note that D'Israeli appended describing the execution of the Jesuit Hugh Green 'is taken from the curious and scarce folios of Dodd, a Catholic Church History of England' and described an incident in 1642:

The hangman, either through unskilfulness, or for want of a sufficient presence of mind, had so ill-performed his first duty of hanging him, that when he was cut down he was perfectly sensible, and able to sit upright upon the ground, viewing the crowd that stood about him. The person who undertook to quarter him was one Barefoot, a barber, who being very timorous when he found he was to attack a living man, it was near half an hour before the sufferer was rendered entirely insensible of pain. The mob pulled at the rope, and threw the Jesuit on his back. Then the barber immediately fell to work, ripped up his belly, and laid the flaps of skin on both sides; the poor gentleman being so present to himself as to make the sign of the cross with one hand. During this operation, Mrs. Elizabeth Willoughby (the writer of this), kneeled at the Jesuit's head, and held it fast beneath her hands. His face was covered with a thick sweat; the blood issued from his mouth, ears and eyes, and his forehead burnt with so much heat, that she assures us

she could scarce endure her hand upon it. The barber was still under a great consternation. –But I stop my pen amidst these circumstantial horrors. (258)

Clarke stopped his pen earlier in the horrors than D'Israeli. As in *His Natural Life* the remarkable thing is Clarke's restraint, his holding back from the full gruesomeness. Clarke's use of physical horrors is rarely a titillating indulgence.<sup>272</sup> He provides sufficient to provoke our nausea at barbarity — but does not exceed the necessary. For an indication of his methods, as important as his borrowings from D'Israeli are those details he chooses not to borrow. Clarke had evolved a style in his *Old Tales of a Young Country* and *His Natural Life* that could readily absorb materials, acknowledged and unacknowledged, from other writers; it enabled him no doubt to keep to his journalistic deadlines; yet if at times it was a technique that looked like plagiarism, it could also be one that achieved a note of authenticity, that respected the historical records. D'Israeli's phrase 'the romance of real life' expresses the quality that Clarke was concerned with. The 'romance of reality' was how he described Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and he applied the same phrase to Charles Dickens' achievements.<sup>273</sup>

Clarke's motivation in writing his *Old Tales* was to show the romantic, mythic potential in those episodes of Australia's early history. His imagination seems to have been fired when he discovered within the historical records the potential of fiction; he was happy to take the records and adapt, expand and explore them — yet always keeping those holds he could on the documentary records themselves. He does not in *Chidiack Tichbourne* acknowledge his sources as he did with *His Natural Life*; it is a much more ephemeral, lightweight work. Yet when he has the records he does follow them closely as in *Chidiack Tichbourne*'s address to the populace which Clarke condenses for his speech before execution.

When Tichbourne's turn came he made a short speech and looking at the bloody relics of Babington said: 'Alas, the

regard of thee has brought me hither! Before this chanced we lived together in most amicable estate. Of whom else went the report on the Strand and Fleet Street but of Babington and Tichbourne. No threshold was of force to bar our entry. Then we lived and wanted nothing we could live for. My dear countrymen, our plot has failed; but my sorrows may be your joy yet; mix your smiles with tears and pity my case. I am descended from a house 200 years from the conquest, never stained but by my misfortune. I have a wife and one child, my wife Agnes, my dear wife and one sister left in my hands. There is my grief.' (306–7)

D'Israeli's account gave the full context from which Clarke selected.

Countrymen, and my dear friends, you expect I should speak something; I am a bad orator, and my text is worse: It were in vain to enter into the discourse of the whole matter for which I am brought hither, for that it hath been revealed heretofore; let me be a warning to all young gentlemen, especially *generosis adolescentulis*. I had a friend, and a dear friend, of whom I made no small account, *whose friendship hath brought me to this*; he told me the whole matter, I cannot deny, as they laid it down to be done; but I always thought it impious, and decided to be a dealer in it; but the regard of my friend caused me to be a man in whom the old proverb was verified; I was silent, and so consented. Before this thing chanced, we lived together in most flourishing estate: Of whom went report in the *Strand*, *Fleet-street*, and elsewhere about *London*, but of *Babington* and *Titchbourne*? No threshold was of force to brave our entry. Thus we lived, and wanted nothing we could wish for; and God knows what less in my head than *matters of state*. Now give me leave to declare the miseries I

sustained after I was acquainted with the action, wherein I may justly compare my estate to that of Adam's, who could not abstain *one thing forbidden*, to enjoy all other things the world could afford; the terror of conscience awaited me. After I considered the dangers where into I was fallen, I went to Sir John Peters in Essex, and appointed my horses should meet me at London, intending to go down into the country. I came to London, and then heard that all was betrayed; whereupon, like Adam, we fled into the woods to hide ourselves. My dear countrymen, my sorrows may be your joy, yet mix your smiles with tears, and pity my case; *I am descended from a house, from two hundred years before the Conquest, never stained till this my misfortune. I have a wife and one child; my wife Agnes, my dear wife, and there's my grief — and six sisters left in my hand — my poor servants, I know, their master being taken, were dispersed; for all which I do most heartily grieve.* I expected some favour, though I deserved nothing less, that the remained of my years might in some sort have recompensed my former guilt; which seeing I have missed, let me now meditate on the joys I hope to enjoy. (259–60)

Although the novel bears his name, Chidiock Tichbourne is a very minor character in it. The protagonist is a young man called Walter Gerrard who joins the secret service operation monitoring the Babington conspiracy that hoped to place Mary Queen of Scots on the English throne. Gerrard falls in love with Tichbourne's sister Barbara (Clarke reduces the six sisters of D'Israeli's version of Tichbourne's speech, to one) and she, a lady in waiting to Mary, plays a far larger part in the novel than her brother.

The intelligence operation is run by Sir Francis Walsingham — misspelled as Walshingham throughout the novel — who is presented as the master mind of spy fiction — 'a human mole' he is called (20) — as

indeed historically he seems to have been. He had certainly infiltrated the Babington conspiracy and knew its every move in advance.<sup>274</sup> Clarke cleverly balances Walshingham's omniscience against the marvellous incompetence of Gerrard who, together with a Falstaffian Captain Hum, does little other than fall into traps, convey dummy messages and spread confusion. Walshingham uses them as decoys and stooges — having his more reliable sources of information; a true superspy, Walshingham delivers the classic line of spy fiction: 'I do not pay you to think', he tells Gerrard (59). All this gives the novel sufficient entertaining quality to while away an undemanding three hours in the rare book room. But its interest today lies in its possible relationship to Clarke's more serious work and to his life. The usurer, Jabez Pinchfee, embodies certain possible wishes for what might happen to moneylenders — the constant support and bane of Clarke's life.<sup>275</sup> Pinchfee is presented as a 'vindictive cripple' (39) and put into the role of withered, aged husband with the beautiful, unfulfilled wife — the archetypal January and May situation. Pinchfee, having been implicated in the Catholic conspiracy, arranged for Captain Hum to protect him from the law:

Gerrard found Hum in his glory.

The usurer's house closely barred and bolted on the outside was within sparking with light and ruddy with good cheer.

The remorseless fellow had unpacked all the rich stuffs which formed the gains of the money changer, and hung them round the apartment. Magnificent caps and velvets glittered on the sideboard. Massy and shining arms gleamed from the wall and Mistress Marjory half-crying half-laughing was busily setting forth an excellent supper of cold venison, pastry and wine.

In the midst of the grandeur sat the poor little owner shivering with fright and uttering feeble yelps of protest as every fresh magnificence revealed itself. (297–8)



And Hum pays court to the young wife. Pinchfee's anti-life qualities are shown in his abstention from alcohol:

'By the Mass', said Hum, 'Tis an evil sign, and betokens a dry and freezing temperament — I would eschew — if only for thy buxom wife's sake — the pernicious habit of temperance.' (225)

Hum certainly eschews it. One of the strands of suspense in the novel is the reader's suspicion that Gerrard has chosen the wrong man as his fellow spy, that Hum is in fact a Roman Catholic, as his various Catholic and Spanish oaths suggest — 'By the mass', 'Madre de Dios'. But Hum is clearly on the side of life because of his liking for liquor. Indeed it is at an inn that the novel opens and that Gerrard first meets Hum, who expounds to him 'the mystery of drinking':

"Tis a science to the which I have devoted many years of unworthy service, and I hold no man my master in it. I have studied it in three countries — in England, France and Spain. I have potted in Holland, sir. I have drank usquebaugh with the Irish kernes and cried me my upsa freeze in the Low Countries ...' (5)

Clarke's own liking for good food and drink finds happy expression in Hum.

An aspect of the novel that invites a search for personal meanings is Clarke's use of Hampstead Heath for a number of episodes. Hampstead was where Clarke grew up in England — a childhood haunt as Cyril Hopkins recalls in his biography of Clarke: 'The southern parts of Hampstead and that pretty suburb now devoted to the residences of small merchants were at the time of which we write reaches of hilly forest carefully conserved and nearly impenetrable.'<sup>276</sup>

Gerrard's first commission is to follow a mysterious figure

to Hampstead; and the conspirators' final battle takes place there. Hampstead represented the England that Clarke knew and that at sixteen he had to leave. His setting episodes of both *His Natural Life* and *Chidiack Tichbourne* there encourages us to look for explorations of personal themes of emigration and expatriation in both novels. *His Natural Life* is of course concerned explicitly with expatriation from England to Australia, and the Hampstead prologue to the revised version of that novel suggests something of Clarke's ambivalence about his own settling in Australia. Hampstead is the site for the killing of the father figures: firstly Richard Devine learns there that he is not the son of his supposed father, Sir Richard, but the illegitimate son of Lord Bellasis; shortly afterwards he finds Lord Bellasis dying on Hampstead Heath and his putative father rushing away from the scene of the murder — and the putative father dies from a stroke later. Richard kills no one, though he had a motive for killing his putative father who was threatening to expose his wife's infidelity. But the killing of Bellasis is in fact Oedipal — another of Bellasis's illegitimate sons, Richard's half-brother John Rex, committed the murder. The Oedipal situation suggests something of Clarke's uneasiness about his own emigration — and perhaps, too, his resentment at his father's not leaving him his expected inheritance, so that he was forced to emigrate. The only way to leave the fatherland involves the death of the father. Richard, discovered beside the robbed and dying Bellasis, is suspected of his murder, acquitted through lack of evidence, but (wrongly) convicted of the robbery and condemned to transportation for life — as if he had committed the murder.

It is not too ingenious to suggest that when Clarke returns to the scene of Hampstead in his next novel it is symbolically to explore further the theme of emigration and expatriation. And once again there are interesting ambivalences. There is a strange discrepancy between the 'official' plot of *Chidiack Tichbourne* and the 'unofficial' story of Walter Gerrard. Gerrard's shift in loyalties has little to do with the novel's main action. The 'official' plot is an account of the Babington conspiracy told from an establishment position. The conspirators are all detected and

executed, along with Mary, Queen of Scots. Indeed, there are implications that Walshingham manipulated the whole scenario as a way of persuading Elizabeth to agree to the execution of her politically troublesome cousin.

But though the 'official' action is concluded successfully and Elizabeth's establishment Anglicanism is preserved, it is all tainted with the hideous cruelty of the executions, and the implications of Walshingham's manipulation of the whole business. There are these seeds of uncertainty that lead us to look at the 'unofficial' plot. The conspirators are broken in on 'in the name of the Queen.' 'Which Queen?' is the reply. (261)

Initially Gerrard acted for Queen Elizabeth. Later, when Mary was arrested, Barbara Tichbourne begged Gerrard to kill the arresting officers and save Mary. He wavered, but did nothing. By the end of the novel, however, he is off to kill the man who betrayed the conspirators, Gilbert Gifford. It is necessary that Gilbert Gifford should be killed, just as it is necessary in *His Natural Life* that Lord Bellasis should be killed. This is the ritual cutting away from the old, in order to join with the new. The old world, the establishment values, the father, the fatherland, can only be escaped by a measure that is both symbolic and extreme. Gerrard can now commit himself to a new ideology — to a support of Barbara Tichbourne's values, to a rejection of the establishment and Walshingham's world. But such a new commitment involves not only a ritual killing, but a killing of something of oneself and of the things that one loves; and the identity of names between Gilbert Gifford and the name Barbara Tichbourne uses in disguise — Master Gilbert — suggests that in killing 'Gilbert', Gerrard was killing something that he loved.

And here as in *His Natural Life* Clarke wavers. Gerrard intends the killing but does not himself perform it; just as Devine was not guilty of killing Sir Richard or Bellasis. Gerrard was making every effort to kill Gilbert Gifford; the consequent suffering of Devine in the convict settlement is such that he would have been punished with had he been guilty. But technically, legally, neither Gerrard nor Devine has performed his killing, so for both characters there is the possibility of returning to the

old — the old country, the old ideology. Each has made a commitment voluntarily to a new life — neither has been forced to make their rejections of the old. Richard Devine chose to be transported for a crime he did not commit in order to protect his mother's name — since he believed Sir Richard had murdered Bellasis after his mother's revelation that Bellasis was Richard's true father.

Yet this very stressing of the free, volitional nature of his characters' choices paradoxically serves to indicate Clarke's wavering commitment. Clarke wants it both ways: 'If I'm in Australia it is for my own reasons, I chose it willingly'; but at the same time he is saying: 'since I came to Australia willingly I could go back to England; I've not done anything to prevent my returning.'

Gerrard's commitment to Barbara and, by implication, to Catholicism, at the end of the novel, can be seen metaphorically to represent Clarke's commitment to Australia — Barbara, like Sylvia in *His Natural Life*, being the female representation of the new choice, the new world. But Clarke's uncertainties about his commitment to Australia, about leaving the old world and the old values, emerge too.

Something of his uncertainty is expressed in the closeness of the names of the three major characters, suggesting some indeterminacies and uncertainties of identity and role: Walter Gerrard, Gilbert Gifford and Master Gilbert (the name Barbara Tichbourne assumes when she rides around disguised as a boy). In 1873 in his story 'Holiday Peak', Clarke had referred to 'Gerard, my boy friend, who fled from Oxford to Stonyhurst, and embraced the discipline of Loyola'<sup>277</sup> — Gerard Manley Hopkins who had been at school with him at Highgate, and had become a Jesuit. Clarke gives to his anti-Catholic protagonist the name of his friend from those Hampstead Heath days who became a Jesuit; while the 'Jesuit' of the novel turns out to be a false Jesuit, an informer; so that when Gerrard tries to kill Gilbert Gifford, we have Jesuit (by name) killing Jesuit (self-killing), and true Jesuit (though he has never realised it) killing false Jesuit (whom in the past he would have killed for being a Jesuit, but wants to kill now for not being a true Jesuit). And false Catholic

Gilbert Gifford shares his name Gilbert with Barbara Tichbourne, the boy-girl Gerrard falls in love with, true Catholic sister of one of the true conspirators.

In the context of spies and conspiracies the implied indeterminacy of roles that Gerrard-Gifford-Gilbert express has its appropriateness. And the Shakespearean associations for this Elizabethan world readily allow not only a Falstaffian Hum but also the girl in boy's disguise, Barbara-Gilbert:

The young stranger was of almost feminine beauty. His figure was slight but well knit. His hands were white, his eyes a dark grey that looked almost purple in the fire light, and a profusion of golden curls clustered around a smooth brow. (12)

When it eventually emerges that Master Gilbert is in fact Miss Barbara there is nothing to stop Gerrard from admitting to his sexual attraction; there is nothing homosexual about Gerrard, he just intuitively responds to feminine beauty even when it's concealed. But this explanation, though it will do, is strangely qualified when we are given a description of one of the conspirators Gerrard sees at Hampstead, who

was magnificently dressed in a suit of violet velvet. The loop of his hat was fastened with a single diamond, his sword hilt flashed with gems, and in his right ear he wore a jewel after the fashion set by the French King. Nevertheless, the effeminacy of his costume was redeemed by its wearer's brilliant eyes and haughty bearing. Perfumed, eared and jewelled, Gerrard saw in him the type of the desperado of the age ... (74-5)

This is certainly no woman disguised, but Chidiock Tichbourne himself. Now having once had a potential homosexual motif in the

description of Gilbert, which is later 'explained' by his being in reality a girl, why do we get this second version of the motif in the description of the 'effeminacy' of Gilbert-Barbara's brother? It is almost as if Gerrard cannot fulfil a homosexual attraction for Chidiok Tichbourne because of the taboo on that relationship; so he is allowed to displace his attraction into an acceptable heterosexual love for Tichbourne's sister, whom he first sees as a beautiful boy. With Tichbourne conveniently executed, there is no hope of Gerrard realizing that attraction to him, so he has to stay with Barbara. And the sexual taboo is displaced into an initial religious taboo: instead of the taboo on homosexuality preventing Gerrard from loving Master Gilbert or Chidiok Tichbourne, Gerrard's Anglican feelings about Catholicism create the barrier between him and Barbara. But the novel ends happily because he breaks down that taboo: the death of Gilbert Gifford represents Gerrard's revenge on the man who betrayed the conspirators and caused Chidiok Tichbourne's death; it represents his overcoming the Catholic taboo and wanting the betrayer of the Catholics killed; but since Gilbert Gifford had hitherto appeared to be one of the evil Catholic conspirators, his death also fulfils the 'official' ideology — the Anglican Gerrard sets out to kill the Catholic Gilbert Gifford; and in trying to kill Gilbert Gifford, Gerrard is trying to kill the 'Gilbert' — to expunge the homosexual image of Master Gilbert and Chidiok Tichbourne, to get all that out of the way so that he can have a straight heterosexual relationship with Barbara; and indeed by killing the traitor, Gerrard will prove his credentials to Barbara. Now this batch of motivations is hopelessly contradictory — but they allow resolutions of things that cannot be resolved in a life situation. And to complicate it further, Gerrard of course fails to kill Gilbert Gifford — the killing is done for him by his mate, his male companion Captain Hum; which both gets the taboos broken down for Gerrard without his committing himself and demonstrates that avoidance of the decisive commitment, confirms those displacements and evasions, that are so basic to the situation.

Clarke's life gave rise to many and various anecdotes, but one recorded by 'Old Penjostler' gives some biographical support for this interpretation

of some of the sexual themes in *Chidiack Tichbourne*. Its heading 'As to Marcus Clarke's fads' again offers a direction for a displacement of its obvious interpretation:

He was once an apostle of the sun-bath as a cure for all nervous diseases. One day he called on a friend at Carlton who was suffering from sciatica, and as there was no one else at home at the time, Marcus easily persuaded the sufferer to go into the orchard at the back, peel off everything, and ramble around à la Adam before the Fall by way of giving the sun a chance to soak in. The friend looked so happy that Marcus decided to have a solar wash also, and the pair were soon strolling round eagerly discussing one of those psychological subjects upon which Marcus could talk so learnedly and so seductively. No notice of time was taken, until suddenly a peal of woman's laughter was heard quite close, and a female voice called out — 'Come this way, Nellie; Charlie's in the summer-house having a smoke, I expect. Nice fellow he is to leave in charge of a house!' That closed the psychological discussion with a sudden snap, and the naked Marcus darted behind the equally naked Charlie, and holding him as a shield, excitedly whispered, 'Good heavens! What shall we do? Those women are between us and our clothes.' 'Oh, it's all right', said his friend; 'It's only my wife and her sister'. 'Oh y-y-yes', stammered poor Marcus, 'it may be all right for you — you know the ladies, and besides you're a hardened married man, but I'm an innocent bachelor, and I'll drop dead if they see me in this shameful state. Good Lord, here they come! Hide me! Sit on me! Shout to them to go back. Don't stand there like a dumb ass; do something! No more sun-baths for me!' The 'hardened husband' gave the warning, and Marcus soon got into his clothes again and over the back fence; but he never smiled again — until

he found himself in his favourite Melbourne pub, trying to make the billowy-bosomed barmaid believe she had been Cleopatra during a former incarnation (Marcus told this to Garnet Welch, who told me).<sup>278</sup>

The language cries out for close analysis — the way the friend ‘looked so happy’, the ‘psychological’ subject on which Clarke talked ‘so seductively’, the phallic suggestions in Charlie’s having a smoke, in the ‘hardened married man’, in the way Clarke ‘darted behind’ Charlie; the anal suggestions of Clarke’s holding Charlie as a shield, begging him to ‘sit on me’, calling him a ‘dumb ass’, and escaping ‘over the back fence’; and then the desperate therapy of the repression, the extreme public assertion of heterosexuality in Clarke’s charming the ‘billowy-bosomed’, emphatically feminine barmaid. ‘Those women are between us and our clothes’, Clarke cries out in the sunbathing story: the women the enemy. And if we look back at *Chidiack Tichbourne* that is how the women appear (except for Barbara, whose special dispensation we have seen). It is a nice torture for a moneylender to watch his wife flirting with Captain Hum before his eyes — but that does not make the wife a nice person. Her infidelity makes her an appropriate wife for such a figure. But more striking is Mary, Queen of Scots, who is presented as the ultimate castrating *belle dame sans mercy*. Poor Babington is destroyed by her:

Mary allowed herself to be drawn into his embrace. Her eyes met his, her breast heaved against his own, his very lips felt the movement of hers as she murmured, ‘I am then loved once more’. She held his face back. Her eyes waxing wide and splendid poured all the passion which burnt her into his soul, and then closed slowly. She shuddered in his arms, and locking her white wrists round his neck, she turned her mouth to his and kissed him full and close.

Babington felt a cloud of fire pass over his senses. Had he not torn himself away he would have fainted.



Mary, transfigured and radiant looked at him for an instant, and then the colour faded out of her cheeks and a cold hand clutched her heart. She seemed to see at her feet two corpses. The stabbed body of Rizzio, and the headless trunk of Chastelard.

‘Leave me, leave me’, she cried. ‘I have kissed but two men, and they are dead.’ (174)

At her execution, Clarke uses the old image of the witch enchantress, the beautiful woman who suddenly becomes the hideous nightmare image of the evil wrinkled hag. Her stately appearance is described, and then she is led to the block and beheaded:

and at once a metamorphosis was witnessed strange as was ever wrought by hand of fabled enchanter. The coil fell off and the false plaits. The laboured illusion vanished. The lady who had knelt down before the block was in the maturity of grace and loveliness. The executioner, when he raised the head as usual to show it to the crowd, exposed the withered features of a grizzled, wrinkled old woman. (320)

The same image of that hideous metamorphosis occurs in Clarke’s hashish fantasy, ‘Cannabis Indica’. J.R. Maze has elucidated the homosexual motifs in that piece:

The symbolism is obvious and easily interpreted; it is like a waking anxiety-dream concerning the dangers and repulsiveness of heterosexual intercourse. Martialis tears himself away from the corrupting old witch but still fears the power of her temptation. He seeks refuge with the roistering students but they too are impure: they lead him into danger on the sailing-ship, and reveal themselves as deaths’ heads and living corpses. A revulsion against

pregnancy and childbirth seems to be revealed when the author describes how the sides of the ship (a symbol for woman's body) 'began to swell and grow ... her shining shoulder heaved, as if possessed with life. There was a shout from below and instantly the whole vast deck was alive with savage forms, which had swarmed up through the broad (vaginal) hatchway. Some laughed like hyenas, some grovelled like swine'. The import of the whole scene is that if we give way to the temptation to intercourse then we would do just anything — become like lunatics or animals.

There is a suggestion of passive, sentimental homosexual feeling when Martialis is saved from this horrendous scene by 'a man naked and bronzed as the Indian Bacchus ... passing one arm around the student he plunged with him into the deep clear water'. This immediately gives way to a childishly conceived idyll with a beautiful young woman, but in the end even she is revealed as the disgusting temptress in disguise.<sup>279</sup>

*Chidiack Tichbourne* is no great work of literature. Brian Elliott gives it only a paragraph in his study *Marcus Clarke*, and he remarks

it was merely a pot-boiler. Clarke must have been delighted with himself for turning it out so deftly. It is entirely free from that vast creative compulsion which made such a burden of *His Natural Life*. To splash in shallow waters was a happy holiday after those deep and melancholy seas.<sup>280</sup>

A pot-boiler it may have been. But some very strange things can lurk in even the shallowest waters, and pot-boilers can often reveal themes that are carefully buried or complexly interwoven with other materials in the more seriously undertaken productions. Even in his slightest works Clarke was not free from his anxieties and compulsions.

# The Stories

Marcus Clarke wrote over forty stories but published only two collections of them in his lifetime, *Holiday Peak and Other Tales* in 1873 and *Four Stories High* in 1877. A third volume, *The Mystery of Major Molineux and Human Repetends*, which may have been planned before his death in August 1881, was published two months later in October.<sup>281</sup> Hamilton Mackinnon, Clarke's literary executor, published both collected and uncollected stories in *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume* (1884), *Sensational Tales* (1886), and *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke* (1890).<sup>282</sup>

The *Austral Edition* offers the fullest selection of Clarke's stories. Mackinnon grouped them in two categories, 'Australian Tales and Sketches' and 'Stories Imaginative and Fanciful'. 'Australian Tales and Sketches' was later reissued as a separate volume as *Australian Tales* (1896) and again as *Australian Tales of the Bush* (1897).<sup>283</sup> It includes all the stories Clarke collected in *Holiday Peak*, two from *Four Stories High*, the complete pamphlet *The Future Australian Race*<sup>284</sup> and a further four uncollected pieces. 'Stories Imaginative and Fanciful' incorporates four of the seven stories in *Sensational Tales*, together with another three pieces. The two categories, 'Australian Tales and Sketches' and 'Stories Imaginative and Fanciful', were reprinted together in facsimile from the *Austral Edition* as *Stories* by Marcus Clarke (1983).<sup>285</sup> Where Mackinnon changed the titles of some of the stories, Clarke's original title is given here first, followed by Mackinnon's in parentheses. Page references are given first to the 1983 *Stories*, followed by the *Austral Edition* (AE).

The weight put on the nationalist 1890s by the new nationalist critics of the 1930s, 40s and 50s like P.R. Stephensen and Vance and Nettie Palmer produced its particular and predominant version of Australian literary tradition. Its negative results are obvious: firstly, a tightening up of the 'nationality' criterion with a devaluing of writers not actually born in Australia even though their creative life was spent in Australia — Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kingsley for instance; a stress on 'national' traditions rather than on international literary connections; and secondly an assumption that anything before the 1890s was derivative writing, merely imitative of English modes, second hand, second rate, colonial. The more positive emphases of the myth are a stressing of those literary forms that found especial flowering in the 1890s as representative, typical and expressively Australian forms. So there was the nationalist cult of the short story, with Henry Lawson as the particular native genius and the fount and source.

Marcus Clarke comes out especially badly from this version of Australian writing. Nettie Palmer voiced the new nationalists' complaint in her introduction to C. Hartley Grattan's *Australian Literature* in 1929. 'The usual reviewers have persisted in regarding us as still "colonials" of the nineteenth century. To them the interesting theme is that of an Englishman in wild Australia, and their attentions has been concentrated on novels like *Geoffry Hamlyn* and *For the Term of His Natural Life* to the exclusion of more indigenous work.'<sup>286</sup> As well as a downgrading of Clarke's great novel, there was a total neglect of his short stories.

The Australian story began with Lawson, the myth read: so anthology after anthology of Australian short stories was produced beginning with Lawson. Until Cecil Hadgraft edited *The Australian Short Story Before Lawson*<sup>287</sup> it was forgotten that anyone even wrote stories before Lawson. Yet there had been a host of magazine writers from the 1850s and 60s onwards. And this lapse of memory produced a distorted picture of the literary history of Australia.

Marcus Clarke's stories show at least three distinct strands of story writing. There are his realistic stories and sketches of Australian

up-country life, that led on to Lawson; there are his formula magazine stories, melodramatic, plotted, sensational; and there are his experimental, metaphysical and fantasy stories. But the later reduction of this early variety of the short story to the single mythic line of the outback story, a reduction fostered by the new nationalist critics, immensely damaged Australian writing. With the emphasis on the Lawson tradition, the new nationalists implied that there was only one sort of story worth writing; indeed, as far as any critical comment or anthologists' selection went, it seemed that there was only one sort of story being written: realistic, up-country, outback, bush stories. To look at Clarke's work in this area is to realize that Lawson was not starting with a complete *tabula rasa*. Clarke, and others, had been opening up this territory, indeed they had consciously seen it as 'Australian' territory. This in no way lessens Lawson's achievement, for it was with Lawson that an appropriate voice was found. But the tradition was being established before Lawson, and Clarke was one of the pioneers.

The late reduction of the variety of the short story to this single strand of the outback story, a reduction fostered by the new nationalist critics, presented a damagingly limited view of Australian fiction. A single, narrow, reduced tradition took its increasingly barren way on; it became established, enshrined, protected and the literary magazines gave it a home. While all the other things that could be done with short fiction were neglected; or at least rarely saw the light of publication. Yet if we look back to the full range of Clarke's stories of the 1870s, we can see a plurality of form and traditions. Then there was an internationalism, an eclecticism, a richness of literary culture, which became reduced to the narrow, utilitarian, insular, aggressively anti-experimental, philistinely parochial 'write Australian' line: something caused not so much by the nationalistic nineties writers, but by the new nationalist theorists, critics and publishers and magazine editors from the 1930s through the 1950s.

Clarke's journalism reflected his experience of Melbourne life. It dealt with the varieties of urban experience in both its topical and its more enduring aspects. But Clarke had spent a couple of years in

the Wimmera district of Western Victoria between 1865 (he was then nineteen) and 1867. It was during these years that he first began publishing in the *Australian Monthly Magazine* which, under the new title of *The Colonial Monthly*, he was later to edit. Clarke worked on two sheep stations, Swinton and Ledcourt, near the small township of Glenorchy. Some of his experiences of those years found their way into his 'Peripatetic Philosopher' column in *The Australasian*.

He wrote, for instance, on swagmen very unromantically and unflatteringly, in accord, no doubt, with the political line and readership of *The Argus* and *Australasian*, the voice of the conservative, landed squattocracy. To Clarke the swagmen were 'hordes of vagabond "loafers"' who shunned work but demanded lodging and food. 'I have no desire to take away the character of these gentlemen travelers, but I may mention as a strong coincidence that, was the requested hospitality refused by any chance, a bush-fire invariably occurred somewhere on the run within twelve hours.'<sup>288</sup>

And he concluded his *Holiday Peak* volume with one of these essays, 'Arcades Ambo'.<sup>289</sup> Mackinnon retitled it 'Squatters Past and Present'. An essay in the manner of Joseph Addison's eighteenth-century pieces in *The Spectator*, it portrays the changing nature and conditions of the squatters, contrasting a description of the old style squatter Robin Ruff with the new style young gentleman squatter leading an elegant, wealthy life, Dudley Smooth. The Latin title, taken from a poem of Adam Lindsay Gordon's, the names denoting the types of characters, indicate the English essay genre to which the piece belongs. And we are presented with two antithetical types. Ruff 'is six feet high, his hands are knotted and brown — mottled with sun, and hardened with labour. His shoulders are broad, his head well set on, his eye confident.' (124; *AE* 324)

Whereas Dudley Smooth 'was of a very different stamp. Mr Smooth was a very young gentleman. His hands were brown, but well-kept, and his whiskers were of a fine yellow floss-silk order, like the down on a duckling. He had but lately come down from his station, but was arrayed in the most fashionable of fashionable garments.' (125; *AE* 325) Yet these

eighteenth century antitheses are seen, even as they are formulated, as belonging to the past. In this new world there are no static, permanent structures; the antitheses now are a dynamic dialectic from which a new force is emerging. Smooth

has not arrived at the glory of his next neighbour, the Hon. Tom Holles Street, younger son of the Marquis of Portman Square, who was educated at Oxford and Cirencester, and has taken up squatting on scientific principles. The Hon. Tom washes his sheep in an American dip at the rate of two hundred a minute, drafts cattle in lavender gloves, has nearly perfected a shearing machine, quotes Aeschylus to his overseer, prohibits all swearing, except on Sundays, and has named his working-bullocks after the most distinguished of the early Christians. The Hon. Tom belongs to a later phase of development, and our young friend is far behind *him* in civilization; but Dudley Smooth stands out in alarming contrast to poor, honest, simple-minded Robin Ruff. (128; *AE* 328)

The Peripatetic Philosopher's facetious note catches that eighteenth-century contempt for enthusiasm, for faddish belief in progress; but at the same time the realities of scientific advances, of the technologies of the older New World of the United States of America have begun to intrude. *The Australasian* readers may have laughed at the Hon. Tom and admired the traditional antitheses of the Ruffs and the Smooths. But Clarke knew that the Hon. Toms were on their way. And he had to look for a new literary tone to accommodate them.

But for his full response to those years in the Wimmera, Clarke used not his journalism nor his novel writing, but the short story. The Lawson tradition of the Australian short story, that you take your material from the bush, the outback, up-country, had already been established by Clarke. The short story was seen as the appropriate form for these materials.

With Clarke, however, the tradition was not a reductive one; to write about the country you turned to the short story, certainly; but to write a short story, you did not have to turn only to the country. Neither Clarke nor Lawson limited themselves in that way. Clarke also wrote naturalistic urban stories, melodramas, historical fantasies, speculative Gothic fictions, and sensational tales. These different settings and experiments in different types and genres were an important part of his short story output. Yet when Clarke came to assemble his first volume of stories, *Holiday Peak*, he gathered together stories that, despite their great variety of manner showing the wide range of Clarke's writing, were all set in the Australian up-country. A tradition was established.

'Arcades Ambo' ('Squatters Past and Present') represents a literary manner that Clarke was to move beyond. There are two further pieces collected in *Holiday Peak* that are sketches of a very different nature — two pieces that are far less formally stylized essayistic pieces. These are 'An Up-Country Township' (*Australasian*, 6 August 1870), retitled 'Bullocktown' by Mackinnon, and 'Grumbler's Gully' (originally titled 'A Mining Township' in *The Australasian*, 5 November 1870, but retitled by Clarke in *Holiday Peak*). In his biographical introduction to the *Memorial Volume* and *Austral Edition*, Mackinnon recorded that "Bullocktown" is well known to be Glenorchy, the post-town of the Swinton station, and all the characters in it are recognizable as life portraits presented with that peculiar glamour which his genius cast over all his literary work."<sup>290</sup> The Bullocktown setting provides something of a Balzacian unity for these separate yet interrelating stories; we finally assemble a topography and sociology of a representative Australian country area; though the enforced unification of setting creates some potential tensions when naturalistic stories and sketches, melodramas, and utter fantasies are yoked together.

'An Up-Country Township' itself, however, is in a strictly naturalistic mode — that distinctively low-keyed, wry, dry, ironic Australian naturalism. It opens:



Bullocktown is situated, like all up-country townships, on the banks of something that is a flood in winter and a mud-hole in summer. For general purposes the inhabitants of the city call the something a river, and those intelligent land surveyors that mark 'agricultural areas' on the tops of lofty mountains, had given the river a very grand name indeed.

The Pollywog Creek, or as it was marked on the maps, the Great Glimmera, took its rise somewhere about Bowlby's Gap, and after constructing a natural sheepwash for Bowlby, terminated in a swamp, which was courteously termed Lake Landowne. No man had ever seen Lake Landowne but once, and that was during a flood, but Lake Landowne the place was called, and Lake Landowne it remained; reeds, tussocks, and brindled bullocks' backs to the contrary notwithstanding. (47; *AE* 247)

In 'Arcades Ambo' ('Squatters Past and Present') Clarke was using the urbane, essayist's tone, looking at characters out there, observing them with a knowing, worldly, distant attitude; sympathetically, certainly, but not with the sympathy of a participant in that world; the essayist is an urban man of letters with a good classical education. But in 'An Up-Country Township' ('Bullocktown') there is a marked difference. Here the writer is expressing an identity of stance with the inhabitants of Bullocktown — laughing wryly at the city-based surveyors who know nothing of the actualities of the country that they map. The Great Glimmera is known to the Bullocktonians as the Pollywog Creek, and it is as the Pollywog Creek that it is introduced, the distant, formal, official name added as a subordinate, secondary piece of information. Interestingly, what starts out as if it were a third person narration, evolves into a first person account — stressing even further the identity of the narrator's stance with the Bullocktonians. Here is someone writing about the country with the values and assumptions of those living in the country, not as an urban, literary, pastoralizing intellectual. This is what we so admire in Henry

Lawson's best writing. Clarke, however, differs in a major, tonal aspect from Lawson here. Though Clarke is writing from the standpoint of the country inhabitants, he is not writing as a country worker. Lawson made that further move in vocabulary, rhythm and tone. Clarke is still writing as the well-educated countryman who can recognize a classical allusion. But importantly he does let the country worker speak, and he frequently puts his narratorial support behind the quoted speech of those workers; though making it clear that while he is used to mixing with people who talk in this colourful and lively way, and democratically happy to mix with them, he himself does not speak in this way. He will quote Wallaby Dick, but not imitate or simulate the manner himself.

There was a church in Bullocktown, and there were also three public-houses. It is not for me to make unpleasant comments, but I know for a fact that the minister vowed that the place wasn't worth buggy-hire, and that publicans were making fortunes. Perhaps this was owing to the unsettled state of the district — in up-country townships most evils (including floods) are said to arise from this cause — and could in time have been remedied. I am afraid that religion, as an art, was not cultivated much in Bullocktown. The seed sown there was a little mixed in character. One week you had a Primitive Methodist, and the next a Hardshell Baptist, and the next an Irvingite or a Southcottian. To do the inhabitants justice, they endeavoured very hard to learn the ins and outs of the business, but I do not believe that they ever succeeded. As Wallaby Dick observed one day, 'When you run a lot of paddocked sheep into a race, what's the good o' sticking half-a-dozen fellers at the gate? The poor beggars don't know which way to run.' (48; *AE* 248)

Drinking is a recurrent theme of the Bullocktown stories. Most of the sketch of 'An Up-Country Township' ('Bullocktown') revolves round

the description of the three public houses there. Similarly 'Grumbler's Gully' describes a mining township twelve miles from Bullocktown, and consists mainly of descriptions of its hotels. And though Clarke departs from them to describe the main street, the gossip, the cemetery, and the religious sects, it is to the hotels that he returns at the end of the piece. And what began as a genial, comic sketch of a mining township develops a sudden, bitter note. He describes the life of the editor of the local newspaper.

Daw is a capital amateur actor, and a smart journalist. His leaders can be good if he likes to put his heart into his work, and every now and then a quaint original sketch or pathetic story gives Grumbler's Gully a fill-up. Daw writes about four columns a day, and is paid £250 a year. His friends say he ought to be in Melbourne, but he is afraid to give up a certainty, so he stays, editing his paper and narrowing his mind, yearning for some intellectual intercourse with his fellow-creatures. To those who have not lived in a mining township the utter dullness of Daw's life is incomprehensible. There is a complete lack of anything like cultivated mental companionship, and the three or four intellects who are above the dead level do their best to reduce their exuberant acuteness by excess of whisky-and-water. The club, the reading room, the parliament, the audience that testifies approval and appreciation are all found in one place — the public-house bar. To obtain a criticism or a suggestion one is compelled to drink a nobbler of brandy. (58; *AE* 258)

Daw was based on Clarke's friend Nathaniel Walter Swan, his name mutated from white Swan to black Daw. Clarke had first met him when visiting his uncle, Judge James Langton Clarke, who lived next door to Swan's editorial office of *The Advertiser* at Ararat. Swan, like Clarke, was a member of the Yorick Club and wrote both journalism and fiction. His

books include a collection of stories, *Tales of Australian Life*, published in London in 1875 by Chapman and Hall, and *Luke Miver's Harvest*, which won the £100 prize for a novel offered by *The Sydney Mail*, and was serialized in the *Mail* from 8 March to 19 July 1879.<sup>291</sup>

In 1869 Swan had become editor of the *Pleasant Creek News*. In the issue for 5 November 1870 he published Clarke's 'A Mining Township', the same day that it appeared in *The Australasian*. The story also appeared in the *Brisbane Courier* and *The Queenslander*. In most of the Bullocktown stories Clarke finds the hotels and public-houses places of amusement, and the drinking part of the geniality of social interchange. In 'Grumbler's Gully' it is a torment. 'To sum up the jollity of Grumbler's Gully in two words — "What's yours?"' (59; *AE* 259) Its bitter note gives an authenticity. This is not a glorification of up-country life but an insider's view of the destructive restraints and limitations that sort of life produced. Because the image of Clarke's Bohemian irresponsibility was so firmly established, not least by himself, we expect to find his fiction extolling the virtues of alcohol. But generally the reverse is the case. It appears as something destructive, even if also inevitable. Yet his attitude is nonetheless very different from the prudish fervour of the crusading teetotalers. They turn up as figures of absurdity in Clarke's stories and sketches.

'How the Circus Came to Bullocktown' (*Australasian*, 20 August, 3 September 1870) tells how alcoholic chaos ensues when two proselytizing lecturers on teetotalism visit Bullocktown at the same time as the absurd, tawdry 'Buncombe's Imperial Yanko-American Circus'. It is a comic story of no pretensions and some nice observations — the sideshows, for instance:

JOHN LAMBTON MERRYWEATHER

Age fourteen and a-half years, born in the County of Grant.

He swallows knives, swords, and all sorts of old iron. He eats pebbles, and is passionately fond of chalk.

Australians!

## PATRONISE NATIVE TALENT!

Price 6d. (75; *AE* 275)

And the Bullocktonians create their own additional entertainment by cutting the tent ropes of the circus in mid-performance.

Squirming, struggling, gasping, fighting, there lay the best blood of the township, the human bottles that held what Daw, the editor of the *Quartzborough Gazette*, so euphoniously termed 'the vital fluid of the colonies.' (73; *AE* 273)

The culmination of the evening's merriment is the lacing of the two teetotaler lecturers' bitters and cordial with gin and brandy, and then guiding them in their induced drunkenness to the rooms of each others' wives. Slapstick as it is, the up-country humour makes an amusing tale.

H.G. Turner, who knew Clarke and was a fellow member of the Yorick Club and the Cave of Adullam, the two literary-bohemian clubs that Clarke was much involved in, wrote the first sustained critical assessment of Clarke in the *Melbourne Review*, January 1882. Discussing the *Holiday Peak* volume, he stressed the authenticity of the material in the collection. For Turner what was authentic was the portrayal of the isolation, the limitations, the dullness, the monotony — these were the qualities of up-country life that Turner saw established by Clarke — and established well before Lawson. Amongst the stories collected in *Holiday Peak*, Turner wrote

will be found some sketches that are most essentially and originally Australian. 'Grumbler's Gully', 'An Up-Country Township', and 'How the Circus Came to Bullocktown', are as completely illustrative of the daily dreary dullness of a small mining community, or decaying bush hamlet, as are the graphic pictures of Bret Harte when describing the haunts of the Californian miner. Who that has travelled

much in the bush could fail to recognize in the 'Royal Cobb' the photograph of many a hostelry where he had passed the night; or in Flash Harry, Boss Corkison, or Wallaby Dick the types that he has found lounging under the verandah or in the bar?<sup>292</sup>

Turner's insights into the context of Clarke's work are generally acute, and may well derive from conversations with Clarke about his literary models and intentions. The mention of Bret Harte in these two essays indicates a context that was clearly in Clarke's mind for some of the stories. Writing to George Gordon McCrae asking him for a cover design for the volume, Clarke cites a volume of Bret Harte's:

Robertson, who is publishing me a little book desires an illustrated cover, and has asked me to supply him with a design for the wood-engraver. The cover is to be printed in two colours. He will pay for the design ... on paper merely ready to be copied by the engraver on to the block ... one guinea. Will you supply us with a design? The size of the book is the same as the small edition of Bret Harte. I send you a proof of the story which I think would illustrate best, with a mark at the spot which seems good for an illustration. I shall be in the library until 4.30 p.m. or 5 p.m. Can you look in, and tell the boy Jones to go aft and take the sheep-shank etc.?<sup>293</sup>

In itself the reference might seem insignificant. But Clarke had reviewed George Robertson's edition of Bret Harte's *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in *The Australian Journal* for March 1871, and had been immensely excited by it. It was to have an influence on his own writing, and to some extent the *Holiday Peak* volume, in its contents and presentation, was an Australian response to the stimulus of Harte's work. Clarke's review opened:

We have always urged upon Australian writers of fiction the importance of delineating the Australian manners which they see around them every day, instead of dishing up the English customs which are current 20,000 miles away. The success with which Mr Bret Harte — a San Franciscan, whose name we never heard until Mr Robertson introduced it to us — has pictured the diggers of California, makes us regret that our advice has not been taken.

The notion that, because a thing is common it is unclean, and that the ordinary daily life of our colony contains no poetry and no pathos, is, of all notions, the most foolish. In no condition of human society can poetry and pathos be wanting; for, to eliminate them from a record of human struggles, it would be necessary to annihilate human feeling. But in a new country, where the breaking down of social barriers, and the uprooting of social prejudices, tend to cultivate that incongruity which is, in reality, the very soul of pathos, there are opportunities for fresh and vigorous delineation of human character which the settled society of the old world does not offer. It is true that there is not in Australia a lettered and leisured class who can afford to pay for purely imaginative literature. It is true, also, that those extremes of vice and virtue, poverty and wealth, which form so large a portion of the novelist's material are happily wanting. But Australia has strange and marked features in her young civilization, which have never yet been touched upon by writers of fiction. Some day, perhaps, some author as unknown as Mr Harte was yesterday, will make use of the material that lies ready to his hand, and produce a work as admirable as Mr Harte's. We hope that day will come soon.<sup>294</sup>

Hart excited Clarke because here was a writer successfully doing

what Clarke had been advocating. Harte was showing the way for a new literature for a new country. 'Any old Australian can call to mind stories as pathetic as "The Luck of Roaring Camp", or "Tennessee's Partner", but it never occurred to him that any wholesome lesson might be told in such stories, or that such stories would be worth the writing.' Clarke's enthusiasm for Harte was shared by Henry Kendall and John Farrell, amongst others. William Bede Dalley reviewing Kendall's last book, *Songs of the Mountains* and Farrell's first book, *How He Died*, in each case remarked on the qualities they shared with Bret Harte.<sup>295</sup>

The influence of Harte is apparent in Clarke's story 'Poor Jo' (retitled 'Poor Joe' by Mackinnon) in *The Australasian*, 15 April 1871. It is a tear-jerking melodrama about the dumb, mental defective Jo who lays down his life to save the life of the young lady he adores, and her lover, from a flood. 'They found his little weak body four days afterwards, battered and bruised almost out of recognition; but his great brave soul had gone on to Judgement.' (26; *AE* 226) Harte captures the Harte formula of the combination of tragic self-sacrifice, of dumb devotion, of a great spirit in a deformed earthly body that can find no socially conventional way to express itself — Jo is literally mute — and of the spirituality and goodness that are latent in the primitive, crude, outback community. And however sentimental and melodramatic we may find the mixture, however routinely formulaic it may seem to us now, Clarke has undeniably learnt the skill of Bret Harte's new formula for making his readers, despite their jaded senses and literary sophistication, sniff back a tear.

Returning to Clarke in an article in *Once a Month* in October 1883, H.G. Turner discussed these stories again and amplified his comments on them and their relationship to Bret Harte's work.

In the more humorous sketches, where he deals so realistically with the eccentric humankind that animated the deadly dullness of 'Bullocktown', his style bears a strong resemblance to that of Bret Harte. In no sense, however, can he be said to have copied that entertaining writer, for



the humour is essentially and radically Australian, and the characteristics delineated are as racy of our own soil, as the creations of his American prototype are distinctively Californian. 'How the Circus Came to Bullocktown', 'Grumbler's Gully', 'Poor Jo', and 'An Idyll of Bullocktown' are all of them so redolent of a phase of life that has now quite passed away in Victoria, and are so clearly sharply outlined, that they may be said to serve a similar purpose to that of a photograph of some whilom important building that the march of progress has ordained to destruction.<sup>296</sup>

Yet it was just this comparison with Harte that Arthur Patchett Martin challenged in his article on Clarke in the London *Temple Bar* of May 1884.

These little stories show that their author could easily distance all local competitors. Even the slightest of them has some grace of expression or delicacy of treatment that elevates it above the commonplace novelette of colonial journals. But I must part company with those local critics who maintain that Clarke's sketches are to be placed side by side with Bret Harte's immortal pictures of early Californian days. At best, the Melbourne *littérateur*, when he attempts to portray the rough scenes of 'up-country' life as in 'Grumbler's Gully', or 'How the Circus Came to Bullocktown', is but an imitator of the author of 'The Outcasts of Poker Flat' and he moreover lacked that great gift of artistic sympathy which gives to the pages of the American story-teller the 'one touch of nature' without which we cannot feel kinship with those creations of fiction that are so entirely outside the range of our own experience.<sup>297</sup>

The criticism that Clarke lacked artistic sympathy, humanity, feeling is one that, originating with Arthur Patchett Martin, is reiterated by Francis Adams, A.G. Stephens and Vance Palmer. The story 'Pretty Dick' is a focus of disagreement on this issue. It is a somewhat earlier story than the others collected in *Holiday Peak* and it appeared in Clarke's own *Colonial Monthly* in April 1869. It is the story of a child lost in the bush, a theme that has had recurrent treatment in fiction and painting.<sup>298</sup> Clarke originally made the child twelve years old in the magazine story, but after some criticism involving the sturdiness and self-reliance of twelve-year-old bush children, he revised the age to seven for the book version.<sup>299</sup> This five year reduction in Pretty Dick's years makes the remorseless emphasis on his little hands, little feet, little tear-stained face more justifiable though not necessarily more palatable. A work very much of its time, 'Pretty Dick' has a much more English, literary tone as its model than Harte's tales.

The night wore on — with strange sounds far away in the cruel bush, with screamings of strange birds, with gloomy noises, as of the trappings of many cattle, with movements of leaves and snappings of branches, with unknown whirrings as of wings, with riplings and patterings as of waterfalls, with a strange heavy pulsation in the air, as though the multitudinous life in the forest was breathing around him. He was dimly conscious that any moment some strange beast — some impossible monster, enormous and irresistible, might rise up out of the gloom of the gullies and fall upon him; — that the whole horror of the bush was about to take some tangible shape and appear silently from behind the awful rocks which shut out all safety and succour. His little soul was weighed down by the nameless terror of a solitude which was no solitude, — but a silence teeming with monsters. (19; *AE* 219)

The grinding pathos leads inevitably to the shameless piety of the final line: 'God had taken him home.' (21; *AE* 221) The following year Clarke himself remarked on the cloying genre he was working in, in his obituary of Charles Dickens in *The Argus*, 8 July 1870. 'Unfortunately the success of the "dying children" urged Dickens to extremes. Every book must have a dying child, and the trick became wearisome. Indeed, much of Dickens' pathos rings false.'<sup>300</sup>

Clarke sent a copy of 'Pretty Dick' to Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose *Autocrat at the Breakfast Table*, which had first appeared as a regular column in the *Atlantic Monthly* 1857–58, was a partial model for Clarke's 'Noah's Ark' column in *The Australasian*. Holmes replied from Boston, 23 December 1872: 'I received your letter and MS, with the newspaper extract, some two or three days ago, and sat down almost at once and read the story. It interested me deeply, and I felt as much like crying over the fate of "Pretty Dick" as I did when I was a child and read the "Babes in the Wood". I *did* cry then — I will *not* say whether I cried over "Pretty Dick" or not. But *I* will say it is a *very* touching story, *very* well told.'<sup>301</sup> Holmes's reaction must have pleased Clarke, and he dedicated *Holiday Peak and Other Tales* to Holmes.

Holmes' judgement was shared by H.G. Turner, who found 'Pretty Dick' 'probably the most perfect of his minor stories.'

Apart from the charming grace and touching pathos of the narrative, the artistically graphic finish of his picture of a hot day on the plains and in the ranges is a model of lucid word-painting ...

The gem of the little volume, as before mentioned, is undoubtedly 'Pretty Dick', the most perfect little idyll he ever wrote, and distinguished from everything else by its refined pathos and almost reverential delicacy of treatment.<sup>302</sup>

Arthur Patchett Martin found similar qualities in the story, qualities that he felt Clarke's other work too often lacked.

The most pathetic of these colonial stories is 'Pretty Dick', which describes with great power the terrible agonies of a little child lost in the bush. Such incidents were at one time no uncommon feature of Australian country life ... 'Pretty Dick' is a beautifully told story, and stands out amidst its author's writings as a piece of pure pathos, and an exceptional tale whose attraction is owing neither to its ghastly horrors nor to its flippancy wit.<sup>303</sup>

But a reaction soon set in. Francis Adams wrote in the *Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, June 1887, 'There is no tale of Clarke's so popular as "Pretty Dick" and it is poor stuff enough.' He found it 'indeed an excellent example of the determinedly pathetic' — but that was no longer something that was admired.

When I read 'Pretty Dick' I seem to hear the kind edificatory voice of a Sunday-school teacher, dispensing literary provender at home to her nephews and nieces ...

I hear the pseudo-humorous cadence of the good creature's voice and the gentle pseudo-laughter of the nephews and nieces seated around. But O the poetry of some of the passages, the poetry and the unspeakable pathos!<sup>304</sup>

Adams called 'Pretty Dick' and 'Poor Jo' examples of 'laboured affectation'; 'Pretty Dick' he saw as an edificatory little puppet and 'Poor Jo' 'a label put round the throat of a tear-bottle. But tear-bottles have gone out of fashion now.'<sup>305</sup> And Adams repeated his judgements in the *Fortnightly Review*, 1 September 1892, in an article he incorporated the following year in his book *The Australians*:

In one of his short tales ('Pretty Dick'), he sat down, deliberately and of malice prepense, to make a special 'study' of the bush scenery.

Unhappily he also made it a study of the pseudo-pathos of Dickens.

The results were, as we have seen, terrible; for Mr O.W. Holmes praised them as highly as he knew how.<sup>306</sup>

A.G. Stephens condemned the story with similar enthusiasm. He repeated A.P. Martin's charge of Clarke's lack of humanity; this, Martin claimed, vitiated even *His Natural Life*; only 'Pretty Dick' was exonerated. Stephens, however, saw *His Natural Life* as the sole exception, while 'Pretty Dick' demonstrated how Clarke artificially and unfeelingly tried to work up 'feeling'; the children's suicide in *His Natural Life* had for Stephens

a true, natural pathos which Clarke must have felt keenly; and throughout the novel there is ever and again a glow of genuine humanity. But Clarke's other work, with rare exceptions, has no humanity whatever. He writes as cleverly as Thackeray, and often in Thackeray's vein, but there is seldom a glimpse of Thackeray's heart. Clarke was usually content to pile epithet and epigram upon the surface of things, without attempting to sound the human depths. And when, perhaps, understanding his deficiencies, he deliberately tried to move his readers by pathetic arts, he failed more dismally than Dickens at his most mawkish moments. For Dickens at least was sincere, though in the attempt to reach 'effects' corresponding with his emotion he strained his art to breaking-point, and his work was false. Dickens has tried to cheat his readers, but it is nearly certain that he also cheated himself. In that grotesque and laboured sketch of 'Pretty Dick', which almost moves his dull editor to tears, Clarke has never cheated himself. The anti-climax shrieks throughout; and he was far too good a workman not to have heard it. It is the story of a child

lost in the bush, elaborated with portentous art, as if the writer were saying, 'Now I will write a pathetic tale. I will wring out your tears, and play upon your emotions; your entrails shall be rent with compassion, and you will say, "Oh, this fine writer! the great writer!"' And always the tale is mechanical; the psychology unnatural. From the Dickensy beginning ... to the careful ending — such an ending from the Clarke of the Moorhouse controversy! ... all is hard ground artificiality. Clarke *must* have known his failure. And he sent it for print, with his tongue in his cheek at the dull audience of Mackinnons!<sup>307</sup>

When all of Clarke's other stories had been forgotten, 'Pretty Dick' still remained in the critical mind as a touchstone of excess, of bad taste. It was the only story H.M. Green mentioned in his *An Outline of Australian Literature* and he found it

extremely sentimental. It is hard to judge such work in an age in which sentimentality is at least officially and among the educated, anathema. But Clarke was always an extremist, who loved to 'pile on the agony' and to squeeze out the last drops of pathos, and he does this here. It would be interesting to know how much of his own work he himself took quite seriously.<sup>308</sup>

Green's doubts about the story are clear enough, though he has enough historical sense to realize the way literary taste changes. But Vance Palmer uses the story simply as a stick with which to beat Clarke:

how could a man with that clear, sceptical mind be so uncritical of what he wrote as to send a story like 'Pretty Dick' ('they always felt they had their Sunday clothes on

in his presence') to the author he most admired, Oliver Wendell Holmes?<sup>309</sup>

Palmer forgets — as H.M. Green did not — that Holmes liked the story.

'Pretty Dick' has one paragraph that is worth remarking for other reasons. It is an unemphasized, unheralded account of an out-of-body experience. It is something so unusual and distinctive that Clarke must have experienced this in order to describe it, touching on the fringes of the transcendental more surely than his contrived fantasy stories, and possibly the result of his experiments with hashish. Pretty Dick classically wakes at dawn to find himself looking down at his body.

By-and-by it dawned. The birds twittered. and the dew sparkled, and the mists came up and wreathed themselves all about the trees, and Pretty Dick was up in the pure and cool sky, looking down upon a little figure that lay on an open space among the heather. Presently, slowly at first, and then more quickly, he found out that this little figure was himself, and that he was in pain, and then it all came back, with one terrible shock, and he was Lost again. (20; *AE* 220)

There are two stories in *Holiday Peak* that are a mixture of fantasy and literary play, the title story itself, and 'A Night with Horace'. 'A Night with Horace' was published in *The Australasian*, 22 July 1871. Clarke retitled it 'Horace in the Bush' in *Holiday Peak*, Mackinnon reprinted it as "'Horace" in the Bush'. Cyril Hopkins recalled of Clarke: 'he delighted in Horace and the classics. Even as a boy he was fond of trying his hand at turning the odes of Horace into English verse and that clever travesty "Horace in the Bush" will well repay perusal.'<sup>310</sup> A knowledge of the classics was regarded as the necessary mark of a true gentleman by Dr Dyne, the headmaster of Highgate School, and Horace's poems were a basic element of the English public school curriculum. In 'A Night

with Horace' the Latin tags are swapped not by literary English clubmen from leather armchairs over the port, but over 'eggs, bacon, and whisky, at Coppinger's' (116; *AE* 316), the Royal Cobb Hotel in Bullocktown. In due course a stranger appears, later revealed to be the Roman poet himself *redivivus*, and engages in a learned literary discussion that becomes a vigorous, alcohol-fuelled debate about contemporary and classical poetry and plagiarism from the works of Horace. Clarke retained a genuine enthusiasm for Horace, as Cyril Hopkins records:

Some months after Marcus's arrival at Swinton, he enclosed in one of his letters a copy of the following verses, viz. a rendering by him into English of the Horatian ode 'Ad Barinem'. He considered, he said, that his lines were pretty close to the original and hoped that I should be able to get them into one of the London magazines but added that he did not ask for the favour of an illustration by my brother, Gerard this time, there being nothing that he could see in them to illustrate. I have never come across them in any published edition of his works and although by no means equal in my opinion to his version of Heine's ballad 'The Sphinx Riddle', nor even to some of his own lyrics, they will, I think, be found of interest, regard being had to the conditions in which they were produced; for amongst the numerous translations of Horace's *Odes*, this may well be the only one composed by an admirer of the Latin poet, who was at the date of its production a pupil on a sheep and cattle station in a part of the country that was then regarded as the 'back blocks' of Victoria. I sent them, as requested, to the editor of *Once a Week* and to one or two other periodicals of that day but they were not accepted; and I accordingly returned them to Melbourne, much disappointed that my efforts at getting his work 'placed' in London had again proved unsuccessful.<sup>311</sup>



Cyril included the text of the poem in the biography; it differs slightly from the version Clarke published in the *Colonial Monthly*, May 1868.<sup>312</sup>

The title story 'Holiday Peak' (*Australasian*, 18 January, 25 January, 1873) is a fantasy of a different order. Its heightened, Gothicized and Egyptianized description of the Australian bush is a fine excursion into the macabre.

There is an indescribable ghastliness about the mountain bush at night which has affected most imaginative people. The grotesque and distorted trees, huddled here and there together in the gloom like whispering conspirators. The little open flats encircled by boulders which seem the forgotten altars of some unholy worship. The white, bare, and ghostly gums gleaming momentarily amid the deeper shades of the forest. The lonely pools begirt with shivering reeds, and haunted by the melancholy bittern only. The rifted and draggled creek-bed, which seems violently gouged out of the lacerated earth by some savage convulsion of nature. The silent and solitary places where a few blasted trees crouch together like withered witches, who, brooding on some deed of blood, have suddenly been stricken horror-stiff. (103; *AE* 303)

Gradually the writing departs from any reality as the narrator begins to speculate on the human sacrifices, 'mystic worship', and 'gloomy glamour of ancient barbarism' performed on the plateau he approaches, citing Mithras, Isis, Osiris, Tammuz, and the religions of Mexico, Africa, the Himalayas and Central Asia. The Egyptian imagery recurrently used to describe the Australian landscape at this time, Brian Elliott has suggested, is in part a response to the charge that Australia has no antiquities: geographically this country, though young in terms of European occupation, was older than Europe, a paradox that fascinated

Clarke. Elliott sees Clarke's source in Adam Lindsay Gordon.<sup>313</sup> And certainly it was Gordon who made that marvellous rhyme of trunks Eucalyptian with columns Egyptian. But the human sacrifices are more of a specialty of Clarke himself — Gabbett's cannibalism in *His Natural Life*, together with glancing allusions in 'The Romance of Lively Creek' (80; *AE* 280) and 'Gypsies of the Sea' ('A Modern Eldorado') (159; *AE* 359).<sup>314</sup> As Leslie Fiedler noted in *The Return of the Vanishing American*,

What initially rose up out of the deep imagination of Europeans, released from imageless repression by the news of savages consuming each other in the Antipodes, was a buried longing for the taste of human flesh — not quite sublimated even by the symbolic eating of the Christian Man-God in the Mass.<sup>315</sup>

Though 'Holiday Peak' is set in the Australian mountain bush, Clarke draws not on any indigenous traditions or culture but on the Gothic imaginings of the European yearning for the primitive and fantastic. His inspiration is not anthropological or observational, but literary, as is quite appropriate for the way that the story evolves when he arrives at Holiday Peak, also known as Mount Might-ha-been. For what ensues is an extraordinary set of might-have-beens from history and from fiction, from life and from art intermingled. Charles Kingsley plays cards with Dr Newman and Swinburne. The Count of Monte Cristo has sold his island to an Australian wine grower. Thackeray, attended by Dr Casaubon from *Middlemarch*, has recovered and completed *Denis Duval* and become good friends with Dickens.

Amongst all this occur what seem to be gloomy reminiscences and unfulfilled hopes from Clarke's own life. In the land of Might-ha-been the narrator, Marston, has become 'an author whose readers are counted by millions and to whom Chapman and Hall give £5,000 a volume'. (Mackinnon changed Chapman and Hall, who had rejected Clarke, to Bentley, who published *His Natural Life* in England.) Clarke gives

expression, in a way that his journalism did not reveal, to a wish that he had never had to leave England for Australia. Though he speculated on returning to England in his letters to Cyril Hopkins, in his journalism his base was firmly Australia, and he rejected the invitation from the English *Daily Telegraph* to return.<sup>316</sup> He always wrote as someone committed to Australia, not as a visitor or tourist or unwilling exile, nor as the stock fictional figure come out to make a fortune in order to be able to return home and buy back the family estate. But in 'Holiday Peak' the doubts are allowed to emerge.

Clarke had returned to the Wimmera for Christmas and New Year 1872–3. He had been overworking as ever, was struggling with the revision of the serial version of *His Natural Life* into book form, and his financial difficulties were increasing. His marriage was unhappy and he was involved in a developing relationship with Rose, his wife's sister, also unhappily married. They speculated on running away together, to America, to Europe, anywhere, but in the end the difficulties seemed too great. He began writing a novel about the relationship, *Felix and Felicitas* but though the first chapters were set up in type, he never completed it. The gloom he took with him from Melbourne to the Wimmera issued in stories rather different from the gloom of the 'daily dreary dullness' of the up-country. He had been thrown back to thinking of his schooldays and adolescence, to the circumstances surrounding his coming to Australia.

The *Holiday Peak* volume consisted of the eight stories discussed. Mackinnon included them all, together with another seven pieces, in the 'Australian Tales and Sketches' of the *Austral Edition*.<sup>317</sup> He began his selection of 'Australian Tales and Sketches' with 'Australian Scenery', a two-page excerpt from Clarke's 'Preface' to Gordon's poems. This served to establish the Australian settings, and he followed it with 'In a Bark Hut', *Australasian*, 17 May 1873 (*AE* 'Learning "Colonial Experience"') which captures something of the origins of storytelling in the European settlement of Australia and serves as a manifesto and context for the *Holiday Peak* stories that follow:

When Thwaites had gone to bed in the corner — he was a most determined sleeper — M’Alister and I could pitch another log on the fire and prepare for enjoyment. Carefully filling our pipes, we placed the grease-pannikin on a mark made exactly in the centre of the table and ‘yarned’. By ‘yarning’, dear reader, I don’t mean mere trivial conversation, but hard, solid talk. M’Alister was a man of more than ordinary natural talents, and had he been placed in other circumstances, would have cut a figure. It was not easy to argue with him, and some of our discussions lasted until cock-crow. The arguments not unfrequently merged into story-telling, and in that department my memory served me in good stead. I had been a sickly brat in my infancy, and having unfettered access to the library of a man who owned few prejudices for moral fig-leaves, had, with the avidity for recondite knowledge which sickly brats always evince, read many strange books. I boiled down my recollections for M’Alister, and constituted myself a sort of Scheherazade for his peculiar benefit. He would smoke, and I would fix my recollections on a long strip of bark which hung serpentine from the ridge pole, and relate. (9; *AE* 209) <sup>318</sup>

Here we have an archetype for one set of origins for fiction in Australia. The long nights, the isolation of the bush, the tobacco, and the recycling of the European heritage. We are back in an oral tradition, though they are literary texts that are retold. The yarns were not self-generated but came from a complex past, to be recreated in a new context. At the same time, it was not only a matter of texts, of free-floating fictions. The stories emerged from arguments. There were issues at stake, values, commitments. Storytelling was in continuum with discussion and argument and belief.<sup>319</sup>

Mackinnon also included in the *Austral Edition* ‘The Romance of

Lively Creek' (*Australasian*, 23 August 1873) which had been collected by Clarke in *Four Stories High*. Pauline Christoval, its tragic adventuress, might have stepped out of the world of Balzac's *Splendeurs et Misères de Courtisanes*. A station owner's son falls in love with Pauline when she tours the outback in a seedy theatrical troupe. But Captain Sporboy recognizes her, torments her with her past, and drives her away without the station owner's son. Sporboy receives his own comeuppance from a poisoned dart he had presented to the local museum. Sporboy is a marvellous creation.

Sporboy, the newly-arrived; Sporboy, the adventurer;  
Sporboy, the oracle of tap-rooms; Sporboy, the donor of  
curiosities to our Museum; Sporboy, the shareholder in  
the Great Daylight; Sporboy, the traveller, the narrator, the  
hot whisky swiller: — Honest Jack Sporboy, the richest  
man, the hugest drunkard, and the biggest liar in all Lively  
Creek. (80; *AE* 280)

But the story's concern is with the destruction of Pauline Christoval. The comic note is only incidental, as indeed it is to the whole volume of *Four Stories High*. Mackinnon, however, includes the one comic story from that volume in the *Austral Edition*. It first appeared in *The Australasian* (12 August 1871) as 'King Billy's Breeches; a Romance of the Civil Service'. Mackinnon retitled it, presumably to avoid giving offence by mentioning breeches, as 'King Billy's Troubles: or Governmental Red-Tapeism'. It is a satire on bureaucracy, detailing the endless correspondence ensuing upon a fruitless attempt to issue 'the chieftain of the Great Glimmera blacks' (91; *AE* 291) with trousers instead of the governmentally ordained blankets. The focus is on the bureaucratic correspondence, not on King Billy himself.

'Holiday Peak' appeared in *The Australasian* in January 1872. It was followed there on 8 February by another story, 'La Béguine', that looked back even more substantially to the period of Clarke's last years

in England, and that has a similarly sombre note. But whereas 'Holiday Peak' was set in Australia, with reference back to England, the events of 'La Béguine' are set wholly in England and France. Clarke collected 'La Béguine' in *Four Stories High* in 1877. The 'wasted youth' amidst 'the wonders of London at midnight' referred to in 'Holiday Peak' is a motif that recurs.

My holidays, passed in my father's widowed house, were enlivened by the coming and going of cousin Tom from Woolwich, of cousin Dick from Addiscombe, of cousin Harry from Colchester or Knightsbridge. With Tom, Dick, and Harry came a host of friends –for, as long as he was undisturbed, the head of the house rather liked to see his rooms occupied by the relatives of people with whom he was intimate ... So, a wild-eyed and eager schoolboy, I strayed into Bohemia, and acquired in that strange land an assurance and experience ill-suited to my age and temperament.<sup>320</sup>

And Marston, the narrator, tells how as a sixteen-year-old schoolboy he encounters a nineteen year old girl who has just been abandoned by her wealthy lover. Marston and the girl go off to Paris and spend all the money the lover has left the girl; then Marston returns to school and the girl to a richer and more distinguished lover than the previous one — moving on from man to man until her tragic death.

'The Poor Artist' deals with the hopeless aspirations of an utterly untalented painter who finally dies of tuberculosis. It is a chilling theme; for as Clarke makes us realize, the sufferings and commitment of talentless artists are as real as those of the talented. And it touches on the anxiety that all artists repress — that perhaps their work is worthless, that their commitment is the commitment of the deluded, that the support of their friends and family is uncritical, unintelligent.

Clarke wrote a new surrounding context for the four stories collected

in *Four Stories High*. The volume opens with a discussion between four characters — Marston, Falx, Tallowfat and the anonymous narrator. Each of them tells a story and each story is linked by a brief continuation of the four-sided dialogue, after which the narrator rounds off the volume by telling his son a bedtime story, making a fifth, untitled, unacknowledged story. It concerns a sparrow that emigrates to Australia, has a generally rough time, but finally brings joy to a dying old woman by reminding her of the chirping of sparrows in her youth in England. As ‘The Acclimatised Sparrow’ Clarke had first published the story in the last issue of the *Colonial Monthly* in January 1870. Then it was used on two further occasions as a substitute for original copy from Clarke. It replaced his usual ‘Peripatetic Philosopher’ column in *The Australasian*, 29 January 1870 when Clarke, just returned from his visit to Tasmania, presumably had found no time to write his column. The following January, 1871, it was used when Clarke, ‘overwhelmed with work’ and unwell, sent only one chapter of *His Natural Life* to *The Australian Journal* instead of the usual two, and the story made up the deficiency again.

It is strange that Clarke incorporates the story here untitled, as a fifth story to a volume proclaiming only four. In the English system of counting, four storeys of a house meant five floors — a ground floor and the four stories above — and so Clarke included an untitled fifth piece. It was a witty play on words but, in understating the number of stories included rather than proclaiming five for the price of four, Clarke once again showed that he was not a businessman.

Had the story come to represent an inability to deliver the goods, so that Clarke included it here as a way of saying that he could not write a new Christmas volume but was simply collecting old material? Or did Clarke feel, having twice cheated his readers by its unheralded substitution in the past, he would throw it in as a bonus to this volume? The volume appeared in 1877 but it consisted of stories all written between 1870 and 1873. Was he consciously scraping the barrel? Or was he simply taking the opportunity of collecting earlier stories into book form, when an opportunity arose?

*Holiday Peak* derived its unity as a collection from the up-country setting of its stories. *Four Stories High* derives its unity from the clubman's *Canterbury Tales* and *Decameron* device of the four characters each having a story that they tell. There is none of the exploration of a milieu, of 'Bullocktown' that there is in *Holiday Peak*. But there is an exploration of mood, of a sense of loss, of despair, of exile. The stories involve events and characters and references ranging through England, France, Asia and Australia, through city and country, through tribal societies and cosmopolitan sophistication. Possibly this was the collection Clarke had assembled earlier with a view to overseas publication. Cyril Hopkins recorded how Clarke

forwarded to me a number of stories in manuscript, for publication, if possible, in London. Although by this time he must have been in his chronic state of pecuniary embarrassment again, he wrote with characteristic disregard of anything like bargaining; or perhaps from natural delicacy at bothering a friend, to make terms for him: 'I do not want any coin for them, though of course if the publisher pays, so much the better; but I am preparing another novel and I want to keep my name up, as actors say, in the meantime. I offered the stories to Bentley but he refused them saying that he did not care for stories but would publish the novel. I fancy Sampson Low would do it. However use your own judgement; I leave all things in your hands. You can, if you like, select some of the stories and try a magazine with them, though the fact of their having appeared in an Australian paper may — I think *will* — be a bar to that. I am not particular as to the titles either so you can change *them* if you like. I think that "La Béguine" is the best story, but, however, do what you like with them *ad maiorem Clerici gloriam!*'<sup>321</sup>



But no English publisher was responsive.

Part III of the *Austral Edition*, 'Stories Imaginative and Fanciful', collects Clarke's speculative and metaphysical fantasies and sensational stories. This genre of stories was a major strand of the short story in English, from Edgar Allan Poe to Robert Louis Stevenson and G.K. Chesterton, but its lack of distinctively Australian materials has impeded its recognition as a component of an Australian fictional tradition.

Fantasy, mystery, metaphysical speculation, these were all interests of Clarke's, though anecdotes of his expression of his speculations generally involve some ironic distancing. He proclaimed a belief in reincarnation but substantiated it by claiming that the two cab horses driving him were once Plato and Pythagoras. On another occasion he tried to persuade a barmaid that she was a reincarnation of Cleopatra.<sup>322</sup> L.H. Allen noted that

the dream element in his nature accounts for some of his reading. He knew Poe, and mentions 'Marie Roget'. 'The Mind Reader's Curse' suggests Dupin, though alas! it is written more in the style of Monk Lewis than of Poe. In that sketch he mentions Count Saint-Germain and Cagliostro. This may have influenced his creation of the alchemist in the serial [of *His Natural Life*]. He mentions De Quincey in 'Cannabis Indica', an adventure into the eerie that may have been prompted by *The Opium Eater*.<sup>323</sup>

'The Mind-Reader's Curse', originally serialised in *The Australasian* in 1873 as 'The Curious Experience of Anthony Venn',<sup>324</sup> is an extravaganza set in the convict settlement of Sydney in 1803, which involves the hideousness of being able to read other people's minds. And it certainly is a hideousness in a community whose members live a melodramatic gallimaufry of theft, murder, adultery, incest and illegitimacy. At the story's end it emerges that the entire experience has taken place in a mesmeric trance, with the protagonist mesmerised into believing that he

has these mind-reading powers. Yet perhaps, while in a trance, he does have them ...

The fantasy stories were admired by Francis Adams. Generally Adams disliked Clarke's stories: 'In nowhere more than in his tales does the literary journalistic vice of Clarke appear in all its detestableness. So many of them bear the mark of haste, of haste weary or clever.' But of the fantasy stories Adams wrote: 'Clarke also did some stories in the style of Edgar Alan Poe, and, at least, two of them, "The Dual Existence" and "The Golden Island" are worthy of a more permanent preservation.'<sup>325</sup>

'The Dual Existence', originally published as 'The Doppelganger' in the *Australian Monthly Magazine*, July and August 1866, is one of Clarke's earliest tales. It is an early working of the theme later developed in 'Human Repetends' ('A Mysterious Coincidence'), the theme of re-enactment in a later generation. It also contains another sort of out of body experience, not like that in 'Pretty Dick', but a human splitting himself into two as a result of a curse, one part watching what the other is doing with a variation of a mind-reader's second sight. These are recurrent themes in popular fiction. The doppelganger occurs in Edgar Allan Poe's story 'William Wilson' of 1839 and in Peter Corris's Cliff Hardy novel, *Torn Apart*, of 2010. And these fantasy motifs are united in a detective story plot, a pioneering murder mystery of the locked room variety, with the traditional clue of detective fiction (the shirt stud rolled into a crack in the floor) but with its explanation coming from the realms of the occult.<sup>326</sup>

'Gypsies of the Sea; or the Island of Gold' was serialized in the Melbourne *Herald*, 24–31 December 1874. Mackinnon retitled it 'The Island of Gold — New Guinea' in *Sensational Tales*, and 'A Modern Eldorado' in the *Austral Edition*. Nigel Krauth writes in *New Guinea Images in Australian Literature*:

It was a moral fable which warned against the follies of poorly-experienced adventurers whose enthusiasm, camaraderie and self-confidence were soon turned, in

trackless, fortune-promising lands, to greed, betrayal and bloodthirstiness. Clarke's timely warning was inspired by the tragic *Maria* gold-prospecting expedition to New Guinea, which sacrificed the lives of thirty-five of Sydney's spirited but hare-brained young men in 1872.<sup>327</sup>

The tale takes us on a quick visit to a kingdom run by an English expatriate who has found isolation and happiness in unlimited gold, a beautiful mistress, and a pact with the sophisticated, human-sacrificing civilization adjoining his own territory in that last unknown, New Guinea.

'Human Repetends' ('A Mysterious Coincidence'), appeared in *The Australasian*, 14 September, 1872.<sup>328</sup> 'It attracted much attention, as much for the forcible style in which it was written as for the daring and speculative ideality with which it was invested,' Robert Whitworth recorded.<sup>329</sup> The story looked back to Clarke's life in England and the circumstances surrounding his coming to Australia. It shares some of the materials, and the same sombre note, as 'Holiday Peak'. The narrator, Hugh Pontifex, emigrates to Australia and ends up writing for *The Argus*. But the interest of the story lies not so much in these autobiographical motifs but in what Thomas de Quincey called 'unutterable and self-repeating infinities.' The story belongs to a formula that emigrated from English writing to become alive and well in Argentina in such stories of Jorge Luis Borges as his 'Theme of the Traitor and Hero'. Appropriately, unending versions of it reincarnate in different centuries in different countries. 'There are in decimal arithmetic repeated "coincidences" called *repetends*. Continue the generation of numbers through all time, and you have these *repetends* forever recurring.' (210; *AE* 410)

G.K. Chesterton toyed with the concept of historical re-enactment in his 1922 collection *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, with the story 'The Hole in the Wall': 'It was almost as if they were the ghosts of their own ancestors ... and playing some old part that they only half remembered.' And again in the story 'The Fool of the Family': 'sometimes what is happening to me grows vivid in a curious double way, as if it had

happened before. Have you ever had that mystical feeling that things have happened before?’<sup>330</sup>

‘Human Repetends’ is an account of a murder committed in Padua four hundred years ago that its narrator believes he will re-enact in nineteenth-century Melbourne — here the murderer is known but the crime has yet to be completed. Hugh Pontifex on leaving England has to sell all his belongings, but he retains a fifteenth-century engraving signed Finiguerra of an unknown, beautiful woman with whose image he is infatuated. One day he sees her in Melbourne. He spends the next three days looking for her after that brief glimpse — only to discover she was murdered by drowning in the Yarra the night he saw her. At the inquest of the girl, whose name was Jenny Gay, he meets Warrend, who also has a copy of the engraving and knows the story of it.

Jehanne Le Gaillarde was a woman whose romantic amours had electrified the Paris of Louis XI. She was murdered by being thrown into the Seine. ‘All attempts to discover the murderer were vain, but at length, a young man named Hugues Grandprête, who, though he had never seen the celebrated beauty, had fallen in love with her picture, persuaded himself that the murderer was none other than the Sieur De la Forêt (the husband of the beautiful Jehanne), who, being a man of ill-life, had been compelled to fly from Paris. Grandprête communicated his suspicions to none but his intimate friends, followed De la Forêt to Padua, and killed him.’ (209; *AE* 409)

Pontifex remembers that the man with whom he saw Jenny Gay was called Forrester. All the names fit when translated : Hugues Grandprête / Hugh Pontifex; Jehanne Le Gaillarde / Jenny Gay; Finiguerra / Warrend; Bernhard De la Forêt / Bernard Forrester. The whole pattern is repeating itself inexorably. The narrator waits to fulfill his unwilling part in the repetition of the design.

‘I live here in Melbourne at the seat of his crime, because it seems the least likely place to again behold him. If, by accident, in the streets I catch sight of one who resembles him, I hurry away. But I *shall* meet him one day, and then my doom will be upon me, and I shall kill him as I killed him in Padua 400 years ago!’ (210; *AE* 410)

‘Human Repetends’ was collected in the volume, *The Mystery of Major Molineux and Human Repetends* in October 1881. ‘The Mystery of Major Molineux’, one of the last things that Clarke wrote, appeared in the *Campbelltown Herald* (Victoria), July 1881, a month before his death. A fine piece of Tasmanian Gothic, it has a Major who never appears on Thursdays, his toothless, glassy-eyed housekeeper Mary Pennithorne, and his surly, animal-like ex-convict manservant, Bagally. They inhabit the ‘Wuthering Heights’ style forbidding house, Castle Stuart, where visitors are accommodated only grudgingly and where a ghostly face appears at a window on a storm-wracked night. Amongst all this broods the hint of some sexual evil. There is the grave of the transported forger Arthur Savary who committed suicide, it seems, when he discovered that his wife was having an affair with the Major’s brother-in-law. There was the mysterious death of beautiful young Agnes Tremayne after she discovers what happens to the Major on Thursdays. And then there is beautiful young Beatrice Rochford, recovering from concussion after a fall from a horse, found dead with an expression of extreme horror on her face after a brief visit from the Major — who promptly commits suicide. We are never told what the horror is, what form the possession by devils takes that the Major says he suffers. The narrator, who is in love with Beatrice, though she is young enough to be his daughter, spends a Thursday night of horror with the Major, but never reveals what happens. The unexplained mystery creates the suggestive suspense, but finally the story is unsatisfactory just because too much is missing when so much of the rest of the story is circumstantially detailed.

‘Cannabis Indica (A Psychological Experiment)’ (‘A Haschich

Trance — (Real Experience)') appeared in the *Colonial Monthly* in February 1868. It is the account of a literary experiment in which Clarke has a doctor observe him and make notes, while he writes a story after ingesting hashish in tablet form. It is one of the very few examples of drug writing anywhere, let alone in Australia, in which the processes of writing were recorded by an objective observer simultaneously with composition. The doctor's notes were then later supplemented by Clarke's own notes on the experience of writing the piece and on his reactions at various phases. 'The drug seemed to unlock the doors of thought' he wrote, (211; *AE* 411) in a phrase that anticipated Aldous Huxley's account of his experiences with mescaline, *The Doors of Perception*.<sup>331</sup>

The style of the piece is conventionally Romantic, less because of any intrinsic properties of hashish than because Clarke expected his associations and hallucinations to be of that Romantic order — the influence of Coleridge and Poe. The same literary models influenced some of his other experimental, Gothic literary works. He had a continuing fascination with the Romantic exploration of different levels of consciousness. De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* is mentioned in the piece. Clarke mentions, too, the English painter John Martin's illustration of Pandemonium, the palace of Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, hanging over the bookcase. It was a painting that the English and French Romantic writers who had used drugs particularly responded to. Alethea Hayter discusses the significance and popularity of Martin's visual style in *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*.<sup>332</sup> Clarke's familiarity with De Quincey and Martin's work suggests that he might have been more deeply into drug experimentation than has been suspected. And the literary conventionality of the material does not necessarily lessen the value of the piece. He was adopting the expected model of nineteenth century drug-induced writing, and the associations and glides of imagery can be ascribed to the disinhibitory effects of the hashish. As a genuine literary experiment, as a piece of real innovation, 'Cannabis Indica' deserves to be better known. Clarke is here attempting to push out the boundaries of what is possible in prose. Amidst the

predictable literary and social conventionalities of the 1860s, here was a twenty-two-year-old writer trying to do something new, something original, something unknown. The whole experimental apparatus of the doctor and the annotation importantly indicate his inquiring and innovatory attitude.

Literary experiment, the self-referentialism and closed loops of the writer conscious of his own process of writing, a prefiguring of the themes of post-modernism, lies behind 'Hunted Down' ('The Author Haunted by his own Creations') in *The Australasian*, 6 May 1871. And the mournful note of 'A Watch on Christmas Eve' ('A Sad Christmas Eve Retrospect') in *The Australasian*, 28 December 1872, may in part be ascribed to Clarke's drug experiments. Earlier in the same month that it appeared he wrote in his 'Noah's Ark' column in *The Australasian*, 7 December 1872, a piece about the depression of Marston, a character based on Clarke himself. The conversationalists speculate that the malaise is due to his bad eating habits or his mental anxieties. Marston replies, 'You are both right and both wrong, but let us change the subject of our talk. I sometimes experiment upon myself, and after one has eaten hashish a depression of spirit follows.'<sup>333</sup>

There are still stories of Clarke's that have never been collected or reprinted. Mackinnon's 1890 collection remains the most comprehensive and accessible collection, representing the full range of his achievement.

## **‘Weird Melancholy’: Inner and Outer Landscapes in Marcus Clarke’s Stories**

When Hamilton Mackinnon collected Clarke’s stories in *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*,<sup>334</sup> he placed as the first item of the ‘Australian Tales and Sketches’ two pages entitled ‘Australian Scenery’. This justly famous passage, originally part of the text accompanying reproductions of two paintings, Louis Buvelôt’s ‘Waterpool Near Coleraine’ and Nicholas Chevalier’s ‘The Buffalo Ranges’ in *Photographs of the Pictures in the National Gallery, Melbourne* (1874), had been incorporated into Clarke’s Preface to Adam Lindsay Gordon’s poems in 1876 and frequently reprinted.<sup>335</sup> It was certainly not a tale, even if arguably a sketch. But its inclusion set a tone for Clarke’s stories that followed, even if it was not the tone that Clarke set. The expected feature of Australian stories by the 1890s was clearly up-country description. Yet when we turn to Clarke’s stories, such landscape descriptions are generally marginal. Mackinnon’s incorporation of the passage into ‘Australian Tales and Sketches’ suggests an attempt to supplement the comparative lack of scenic settings in the stories themselves.

As the passage demonstrates, the relative absence of landscape writing in the stories was not a result of any inability in Clarke. Rather, the mode had already been perceived as ended. The passage was a verbal equivalent for paintings already there in photograph. Reproduced in black and white, Clarke brought to them verbal colour. But the text is



moribund, if not superfluous. Written to illuminate the mechanically reproduced art, the obsolescence of the mode is apparent to the most cursory inquiry. Clarke looked into the technological future often enough — in ‘Arcades Ambo’ (‘Squatters Past and Present’) with its concluding vision of ‘squatting on scientific principles’, in Dr Cannabis’ proposals for mankind’s future chemical life and conversion by hypodermic syringe in the ‘Noah’s Ark’ column;<sup>336</sup> and in the monograph *The Future Australian Race* (1877). Technical developments were superseding the verbal landscapist’s tradition. Colour photography and cheap colour printing were not far away.

It is only in ‘Pretty Dick’ (1869) that we are conscious of sustained passages of natural description. And to dwell on them in this story of a child’s death in the bush is something that seems hardly proper to do. The theme is so harrowing that the reader — this reader, anyway — shies away. The foregrounding of landscape here serves to delay dealing with the painful human experience. The landscape is dwelt on to avoid the suffering, and that avoidance, of course, serves only to underline the suffering, to enforce the full pathos of the situation. It is a technique Clarke was to use with similar effect in *His Natural Life*.

The focus on the bush scenery is the acceptable subject that displaces the unacceptable death of the child: and the focus on the scenery develops the powerful suspense, the delay of the inevitable closure. For with the closure of the story we know will come the child’s death. The long drawing out of the story is the emotional refusal of closure, the more scenic description the later the inevitable facing of the end. And the longer the scenic description, the longer the process of dying, the longer the suffering.

We are very conscious of the English ‘literary’ tone of ‘Pretty Dick’; as H.G. Turner characterized it, ‘the artistically graphic finish of his picture of a hot day on the plains and in the ranges is a model of lucid word-painting’.<sup>337</sup> But Clarke was always a very ‘literary’ writer, no less so when he evolved a more translucent, economical style. His work was saturated with literary reference, allusion and memory. Though his stories

have tended to be disregarded as belonging to the 'colonial' period, he was not at all a raw, colonial writer. Yet in this literariness he was perhaps characteristically colonial, asserting membership of that social club of literary acceptability which in other ways — leaving England for Australia, not taking up the offer to return to write for the London *Daily Telegraph* — he rejected. The literary references are properly resituated as strategic trappings by which to gain that acceptance in order to infiltrate alien material into his fictions: Australian social reality, and his increasingly radical vision. It did not work. The literariness helped to alienate him from Australian nationalists, who perhaps saw his international literary culture as a threat, the insignia of that social club of literary acceptance from which they felt, and were, excluded. But Clarke was no less excluded. Only one of his stories found publication outside Australia in his lifetime, 'A Mining Township' ('Grumbler's Gully' he retitled it in *Holiday Peak*), which, having appeared in *The Australasian*, 5 November 1870, was reprinted in London in *All the Year Round*, the journal once edited by Charles Dickens, 22 February 1873.<sup>338</sup> Not insignificantly it is, after 'Pretty Dick', a story that has one of his most sustained set pieces of landscape description.

The first impression of Grumbler's Gully is, I confess, not a cheering one. I think it was Mr Caxton who replied when asked what he thought of his new-born infant, 'It is very red, ma'am'. The same remark would apply to Grumbler's Gully. It is very red. Long before you get to it you are covered with dust that looks and feels like finely-powdered bricks. The haggard gum-trees by the roadside — if you can rightly call it a roadside — are covered with this red powder. The white near leader seems stained with bloody sweat, and the slices of bark that, as you approach the town, fringe the track, look as though they were lumps of red putty, drying and crumbling in the sun. On turning the corner, Grumbler's Gully is below as a long, straggling street, under a red hill

that overlooks a red expanse of mud flecked with pools of red water, and bristling with mounds, shaft sheds, and wooden engine-houses. The sun is sinking behind yonder mighty range, under whose brow stretches that belt of scrub, and marsh, and crag that meets the mallee wilderness, and minor mountains rise up all around us. Grumbler's Gully is shaped like a shoe with a lump in the middle of it, or rather, perhaps, like one of those cock-boats children make with folded paper. It is a ridge of quartz rising in the midst of a long valley surrounded by mountains. (52–3; *AE* 252–3)

From the literary allusion Clarke moves into the realistic description, that vivid, so true picture of the red dust. The expected elegancies of literary landscape — 'the sun is sinking behind yonder mighty range' come in as pastiche only to be strikingly particularized with the specifically Australian 'mallee wilderness', and to be placed as somehow old fashioned, old world, passé. And the sketch is resituated in the now carefully not high art image of 'a shoe with a lump in the middle of it'. The cultural expectations of landscape writing from Sir Walter Scott to Thomas Hardy are there in outline; the new unmystified reality is stridently pasted over them. The vivid, harsh, above all modern poster colours are superimposed on the faded chiaroscuros of the old world imaginings.

And likewise with social manners as with topography:

The place is underlined with 'sinkings', and the inhabitants burrow like moles beneath the surface of the earth. It is no disgrace — quite the reverse — in Grumbler's Gully to wear moleskin trousers stained with the everlasting red clay. There is, indeed, a story afloat there to the effect that a leading townsman presided at a public dinner in those garments, and was not a whit less respectable than usual. (53; *AE*, 253)

Here is a new world, a new civilization, requiring a new literature to express it.

The peculiarity of Main Street is its incongruous newness. Around are solemn, purple hills, with their hidden mysteries of swamp and wilderness; and here, on the backbone of this quartz ridge, in the midst of a dirty, dusty, unsightly mud-patch, punched with holes, and disfigured with staring, yellow mounds, are fifty or sixty straggling wooden, iron and brick buildings, in which live people of all ranks of society, of all nations, of all opinions, but every one surrounded with his or her particular aureole of civilisation, and playing the latest music, drinking the most fashionable brand of brandy, reading the latest novels, and taking the most lively interest in the election for president, the Duke of Edinburgh, the Spanish question, the Prussian war, and the appalling fact that oysters in London are positively three shillings a dozen! (56; *AE* 256)

We can see in the case of Clarke the recurrent contradiction of the colonial expatriated writer wanting, but failing to achieve, metropolitan acceptance. The London market would accept the exotic, the strange landscape, the remote settings: while the expatriated writer was concerned with the human situations, the social realities of the new world. Literary London was not interested in social realities other than its own: while for the colonial writer, landscape in itself was something of only limited usability. The hidden mysteries of the solemn, purple hills remain hidden. Landscape is generally a perfunctory presence in these stories. It is not that Clarke was not interested in art and visual representation; he certainly was. In 'Cannabis Indica' ('A Haschich Trance') works of John Martin, Birket Foster, Cattermole, Holbein and Gustav Doré (on whom he wrote one of his earliest essays) adorn the room.<sup>339</sup> Nor is it the case that the mechanical reproduction of paintings was already dominant, though

photography and new printing technologies were well advanced. But the genre of landscape writing had in its own superabundance exhausted the effect of those set pieces. At the point that print descriptions had already saturated themselves, had become purple passages and clichés, print and photography were there to take over. Clarke's stress was on human society, human character, not on landscape: on how society is different in a new world, not on how the scenery is different.

Discovering Australian social realities was not a way to find literary acceptance in London. For new models Clarke soon turned to the new world. He had reviewed Bret Harte's *The Luck of Roaring Camp* in the *Australian Journal* for March 1871. 'Poor Jo' appeared in *The Australasian* in the middle of the following month, April 15. But to assume from this that Harte was the inspiration for Clarke in writing about Australian manners is not correct. Clarke's review had begun: 'We have always urged upon Australian writers of fiction the importance of delineating the Australian manners which they see around them every day, instead of dishing up the English customs which are current 20,000 miles away.' He had been urging this for some time. 'An Up-Country Township' ('Bullocktown') had appeared seven months earlier. We cannot be sure dates of publication necessarily relate closely to dates of composition; but when there is no reason not to assume it, it makes sense to assume that Clarke's initial forays into the Bullocktown milieu were written in the order in which they were published in *The Australasian*: 'An Up-Country Township', 6 August 1870; 'How the Circus Came to Bullocktown', 20 August and 3 September 1870; and 'A Mining Township', 5 November 1870. Clarke's journalistic practice was to write for deadlines, rather than to store up and lay by. He had begun his project of representing the Australian outback and mining life already. Harte came to hand as one possibility, and 'Poor Jo' is written in a Harte mode. We need not assume plagiarism or furtive imitation — Clarke has proclaimed his enthusiasm for Harte in the review. 'Poor Jo' is best seen as a conscious exercise in a literary mode, in a particular new style of emotion. The following month 'Hunted Down' ('The Author Haunted by his own Creations')

was published in *The Australasian*, 6 May 1870; and here there is a remarkable sophistication of literary awareness, of self-awareness, of the very fictionality of fiction; here the creations of fiction return on their author to torment him, to rebel against the oppression of his narratives. To read this only as a whimsical, facetious, cosy essayist's piece is to be confused by the Victorian ambience; we associate that with the coy, the insinuating, those awful mutton-chopped music hall compères. But forget the whiskers and resituate 'Hunted Down' (its very title catches the resonance of the writer's paranoia, well attested in literary biography) in a world of modernist collage, in which the unlikely collocation — Jean Harlow meets Billy the Kid in Michael McClure's *The Beard* (1965) — are part of avant-garde experiment, a sign of the sophistication of the presented art: then we can see Clarke as a self-conscious, self-aware literary creator, as adept with the images and clichés and archetypes of fiction as any post-modern collagist.

The splice of unlikely bedfellows, the intercutting of disparate sources can similarly be found in 'Poor Jo', which draws not only on the Bret Harte formula of divine devotion in the deformed, dumb, earthly form, but also on Victor Hugo's portrait of Quasimodo, the hunchback in *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831). The allusion is explicit for those who recognize it, unobtrusive for those who do not; invoked, acknowledged, not purloined:

His utmost mirth never went beyond an ape-like chuckle,  
that irradiated his pain-stricken face, as a stray gleam of  
sunshine lights up the hideousness of the gargoyle on some  
old cathedral tower. (22; *AE* 222)

'A Night with Horace' ("Horace" in the Bush) is nothing if not literary play: a reincarnated Roman poet emerging from the Australian outback. There might seem no cause to have set it in Bullocktown. Indeed, what setting there is, is nakedly perfunctory, just an opening identification:

The coach had broken down at Bullocktown, and we five — that is to say, O'Donoghue, Marston, Tom Didbin, McTaggart and myself — were partaking of eggs, bacon and whisky at Coppinger's. (116; *AE* 316)

Do we see here a blasé disregard of the expectations of setting, of landscape? The ensuing discussion could just as readily have been set in Melbourne, Paris, Florence. Or could it? Is Clarke's point perhaps not merely to exploit a successful series of stories by putting into that accepted setting an idea for a story that he had from another context? Perhaps we could consider it more positively, and see that his project to delineate Bullocktown and its environs was a project to establish a totality, to create a literary world in which Wallaby Dick and Quintus Horatius Flaccus could readily coexist. This was the discourse he was attempting to establish. We can see the story reductively as Clarke's making use of the English classical education he had received at Highgate; but we can also see it as an heroic attempt at integration, a precursor of that later attempt in the 1920s by Norman and Jack Lindsay and the *Vision* group to re-establish the Mediterranean muses in Australia, to resettle the classical spirit. Though to write 'classical' is to seem to put the muses and their voices back in time; the point for both Clarke and the Lindsays was that the values of that literature and mythology were immortal, eternal, recurrent.

'A Night with Horace' appeared in *The Australasian*, 22 July 1871, and was followed within a month by 'King Billy's Breeches' ('King Billy's Troubles'), 12 August 1871. This is in part a story in letters; it is not totally an epistolary narrative like those great eighteenth-century novels by Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1747–8). But it incorporates letters, and incorporates them with all the file numbers and bureaucratic presentation of addresses and formalities in the way that avant-garde modernism reproduced photographic film with the spool notches and identification codes and lettering along the edge. This visual illusion of the documentary, this presentation of the letter as illustrative

object, set out and separated from the narrative rather than paraphrased and absorbed into the authorial narrative flow, enacts Clarke's theme. Here flow is disrupted by the cited evidence, by documentary letters not even shorn or peeled of all their irrelevant verbiage; for in that irrelevant verbiage and file numbering, Clarke reads the true meaning. These governmental institutions are indeed concerned with the irrelevant verbiage, file numbers, trappings; the marginal has taken over the centre, to prevent anything from getting done. The bureaucratic style is the substance, the bureaucratic medium is the message, a self-justifying, bland political bureaucracy designed to obstruct public access.

The project of representing Bullocktown, up-country Australia, is not one reduced to merely realistic or naturalistic modes; it is not merely a matter of landscape. Clarke is engaged in a project of literary exploration, of trying to find the appropriate forms, new forms for a new world, new social experiences, new social relationships.

Clarke had established his reputation in Melbourne with a newspaper column, 'The Peripatetic Philosopher', in *The Argus* in 1867. As a columnist he was establishing a character, a recognizable personality, a cross between a brand name and a commodity. It was pseudonymous, signed 'Q': the brand of the Swinton and Ledcourt stations near Glenorchy where he had spent the years 1865 to 1867 and where the Bullocktown stories are set. The letter from up-country comes in as his letter to urban literary success. But though pseudonymous, maybe even more because of this pseudonymity, a marketable character, a personality of attitudes and values, a stance had to be established.

Clarke was already marketing the autobiographical in his column before writing these Bullocktown, and other, fictions in which the autobiographical traces appear. When the traces do appear, we would better see them not as the marginal to be excised for annotation in the biography, but rather as the displaced centre, the real interest, that the commercial plots, the expected scenic descriptions which purport to be the centre of interest, are in fact carrying, are the excuse for. Cyril



Hopkins remarked on this quality:

Then there are amusing compositions of a nondescript character, some of which, although apparently merely short stories, are found, on closer inspection, even when cast in that form, to be rather the vehicle for the author's humorous reflections or the play of his fancy, than short stories in the ordinary sense of the term.<sup>340</sup>

'In A Bark Hut' ('Learning "Colonial Experience"') is directly autobiographical in manner; this is the narration of lived experience, the writer actually going out there and doing this, like Jack London or Jack Kerouac. Clarke never went back to station work. It is not clear for how long he did live like this up-country. But the value of the story presents itself as residing in his having experienced what is described. And within the memoir of the bark hut days there is a further brief memoir of the narrator's earlier boyhood and young manhood in England:

I had been a sickly brat in my infancy, and having unfettered access to the library of a man who owned few prejudices for moral fig-leaves, had, with the avidity for recondite knowledge which sickly brats always evince, read many strange books. (9; *AE* 209)

This note recurs and is developed in a number of stories. It is there in 'Human Repetends' ('A Mysterious Coincidence'):

The only son of a rich widower, who lived but for the gratification of a literary and political ambition, I was thrown, when still a boy, into the society of men thrice my age, and was tolerated as a clever impertinent in all those witty and wicked circles in which virtuous women are conspicuous by their absence ... (203; *AE* 403)

It is there in 'La Béguine', a story first published in *The Australasian*, 8 February 1873, but not collected by Mackinnon, though included by Clarke in his *Four Stories High*:

a wild-eyed and eager schoolboy, I strayed into Bohemia,  
and acquired in that strange land an assurance and  
experience ill-suited to my age and temperament.<sup>341</sup>

And it is there, reversed on Mount Might-ha-been, in 'Holiday Peak':

You might have wasted your youth in such places, and got  
into no end of mischief, had not your father kept such a  
strict and friendly eye upon you. (109; *AE* 309)

Time after time Clarke establishes his Australian settings only to introduce autobiographical recollections of the old world.

One aspect of the newspaper column is that it puts the writer at the centre, rather than the artefact. It is the columnist's personality that unites the items. But is this foregrounded writer the poet-prophet of Milton, Blake and Whitman, or is it the writer as entertainer, commodity producer? Indeed, can we make such clear-cut oppositions? Clarke is writing in a particular market situation; he has to provide the product for the newspapers. In order to be accepted by the papers, he has to write in certain formulae, formulae much more ruthlessly determining than any classic literary models that might be thought to have determined Milton's production. This sort of magazine writing was to prove the destruction of F. Scott Fitzgerald.<sup>342</sup> Yet even in those 'uncollected' stories of Fitzgerald's, something of the personality comes through, deformed and maimed, slick and formulaic and tired as those stories are. Rather than seeing Clarke's stories as irredeemably *Sensational Tales* (the title under which Mackinnon published a collection of seven of them)<sup>343</sup> we might more profitably see Clarke as taking the opportunities available and still leaving his own signature, conveying his own vision.

Clarke had written stories independently of his column, notably 'Cannabis Indica', 'The Doppelganger' ('The Dual Existence') and 'Pretty Dick'. But the distinction between story and column item was often blurred. 'Arcades Ambo' was originally one of 'The Peripatetic Philosopher' columns. But its legitimacy as a 'tale' is established by Clarke's republishing it in *Holiday Peak and Other Tales* (1873). 'An Up-Country Township' was first published in *The Australasian* with the by-line 'by Marcus Clarke (The Peripatetic Philosopher)'. And the 'Noah's Ark' column in *The Australasian* (18 May 1872 — 13 September 1873) included as well as traditional column pieces, dialogues and poems, a number of stories, 'Human Repetends' and 'Holiday Peak' amongst them.<sup>344</sup> How do we interpret this relationship of the story, or tale, or sketch to the column? The column, of course, is a way of getting regular space; the writer requires the space, the outlet, the situation. The column allowed stories, sketches, poems, dialogues. It was a slot to be filled. But we can also see a subversion of genre occurring. 'Arcades Ambo' is the Addisonian essay, re-presented as a tale. 'An Up-Country Township' and 'A Mining Township' are sketches — with no plots, no narrative, but nonetheless a vivid recreation of a milieu, an ambience. And we have traditional plot in 'Keturah' ('Gentleman George's Bride') or 'The Romance of Lively Creek'. Clarke is not restricting himself to one specific mode for expression; his project of Bullocktown incorporates these various discrete, discrepant even, modes. For the laconic realism of the sketches is discrepant with the surrealism of 'Holiday Peak' or 'A Night with Horace'. Yet their shared Bullocktown setting insists on a shared role in some other reality, the reality where fact and fiction coexist as equal thought-forms, where characters from fiction consort with the novelists who created them — a nightmare in its comic way in 'Hunted Down', and recurring again as a fantasy situation in 'Holiday Peak', where Dickens, Thackeray, the Count of Monte Cristo, Dr Lydgate, Casaubon and Clarke's childhood friend Gerard Manley Hopkins all coexist. This surrealism, this warp in fictionalizing, in which the fiction re-enters as an autonomous reality within a larger framing fiction, is recurrent in Clarke's stories. So fiction

both extends and redefines itself by incorporating essay and sketch, and also redefines itself into another dimension by incorporating itself as legitimate fictionalisable material. The author writes about his own characters resisting his authority, postulating their autonomy. We can find this subversion of the genres in other aspects of Clarke's work. There is the way, for instance, he used the account of a horse race in his first novel *Long Odds* for a report of the Melbourne Cup in 1873. But this incident of fiction becoming journalism (not quite the same as his report of a concert piece that was not performed) is complemented by the massive incorporation of journalism and documentary report into the fictional *His Natural Life* and *Chidiack Tichbourne*, wholesale incorporations, not mere 'source materials'. Clarke simply transcribed and cut them in. The separations between what is presented as fiction and as fact, between story and journalism, novel and documentary, tale and sketch, are dissolved by Clarke. The writing takes him across the arbitrary critical constructs of genre boundaries that bear so little relation to the actualities of literary creation.

We can hardly fail to notice the recurrence of unhappy marriage, frustrated marriage and fulfilment denied in the stories published from the middle of 1872 through the middle of 1873. The theme is dominant in 'Keturah' in *The Australasian* 8, 15 and 22 June 1872, 'Human Repetends', 14 September, 'A Watch on Christmas Eve' ('A Sad Christmas Eve Retrospect'), 28 December, 'The Romance of Lively Creek', 23 August 1873, and 'The Schoolmaster's Wife' ('Romance of Bullocktown') in the *Australasian Sketcher*, 19 April 1873. Do we collapse these into the autobiographical and say, we know that Clarke's own marriage was unhappy at this time?<sup>345</sup> We know that he was in love with his wife's sister and they talked of disappearing together. Or do we say, these are stories of normative social experience, many marriages are unhappy, much love blighted? We can situate this in a larger social critique — the alienating conditions of modern life preclude the possibility of sustaining marital and romantic relationships. There is enough in Clarke's generally critical perspective of nineteenth-century social norms — from the

convict system through to the 1870s — to support such a position. We might dwell on the concluding lines of ‘Keturah’, echoing his review of Bret Harte: ‘Ah! there is a great deal of poetry in the lives of some very unpoetical-looking people, isn’t there?’ (46; *AE* 246). And we can relate ‘Poor Jo’ of a year earlier to this group of stories of unfulfilled love — with the gypsy Esmeralda beloved of Quasimodo Aryanized into the blonde Miss Jane for this white man’s frontier. Cyril Hopkins quotes the observation of Margaret, the wife of Clarke’s friend and collaborator Robert Whitworth: ‘He had troubles of which people at the time had no idea. His life is in his short stories. I am astonished to think how dull we were in not seeing it before.’<sup>7346</sup>

‘The Curious Experience of Anthony Venn’ (‘The Mind Reader’s Curse’) appeared in *The Australasian*, September to November 1873, following on from ‘The Romance of Lively Creek’. Mackinnon collected it in *Sensational Tales* and in the ‘Stories—Imaginative and Fanciful’ section of the *Austral Edition*. The themes of unhappy marriage and unfulfilled love run as much through these categories as through the ‘Australian Tales’. The forbidden love — ‘Eleanor was the daughter of the doctor’s wife, and his natural sister’ (182; *AE* 382) — suggests another formulation of Clarke’s forbidden love for his wife’s sister. This incest taboo preventing the fulfilment of Anthony’s love for Eleanor serves the same function as Captain Sporboy’s mysterious information that prevents the fulfilment of Harry Beaufort’s love for Pauline Christoval in ‘The Romance of Lively Creek’. Different fears and taboos are recreated that structurally fulfil the same role: the prevention of fulfilment in love. And the theme is multiplied in ‘The Gypsies of the Sea or The Island of Gold’ (‘A Modern Eldorado’). Here we are in the realm of the literature of bachelors, the all male adventure. Just the empty shoe of the lady, the trace, is there to suggest that the absent feminine might ultimately be forthcoming.

We rushed forward in the direction of the sound, and  
found ourselves in what had been a magnificent boudoir,

furnished with every luxury that fancy could suggest. The vases were broken, the flowers scattered, torn music and mangled books littered the carpet, and on the floor by the open window lay the only sign of the late occupant — an Indian scarf and a tiny gold-embroidered slipper. This, then, was the mystery of Borlase's seclusion. (155; *AE* 355)

And the woman turns out not to be someone like Mr Kurtz's exotic African mistress in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) but the blue eyed, golden haired Venetia. And Venetia is beloved by more than one of these male companions.

From the nation gathered below went up a yell like that which might have greeted the second fall of Satan — a yell of hate, and blood, and fury. The torches tossed wildly. The fleet swayed and shook. A torrent of pistol and matchlock balls spent themselves in vain against the mid-masonry of the *tocali*. Hugh Borlase raised the fainting woman in his arms and bore her furiously to the stairs. Her blue eyes uplifted to heaven, her golden hair streaming, her naked arms upraised in despair, she was borne past me, and I recognized Venetia. 'So then,' I cried, furious even in that desperate peril, 'it was for this you stole my love and wrecked her life!' 'Silence!' said Allan Forbes, savagely, 'I loved her, also; let us save her.' In vain! From out the door we quitted poured the guards of the god ... (159–60; *AE* 359–60)

The sexual psychodrama with its multiple male jealousies dominates over the 'swarming hosts' of 'the guards of the god'. The extreme external drama, like some *Boy's Own Paper* extravaganza, becomes the background for sexual frissons — naked arms, betrayal, rivalry. Discovered, Venetia represents just the same set of sexual anxieties to the males as by her

absence, that image of the ransacked room with its broken vases, fallen flowers, torn music and such like images of defloration and defilement. And then there is the amazing climax:

Suddenly Venetia rose erect, and flinging her arms round the neck of her lover, hid her burning face on his bosom for one passionate instant.

‘You have given up too much for me, Hugh, too much. I would not wish to live, having seen what I have seen to-night. Forgive me! Farewell!’

She sprang from his arms, leapt into the huge coping from the Tower, and then, like a white flash, disappeared headlong.

A horrible shout of joy went up from the city, and then all was silence. (161; *AE* 361)

This is the ultimate in male fantasy. The soiled woman — beloved one, once beloved, wife — resolves the problem of the males by just throwing herself out of the way.

To see analogies with Clarke’s own marital situation is not to collapse the fictions into the life, but to reinsert the life experience into what might too readily be taken as the empty formulae of magazine fiction. This was the medium Clarke was working in. This was what was expected in commercial media, and he was writing for the commercial media. Financial needs. Dire necessity. So we can see the archetypes enlivening the fictional formulae. We might notice also the perfunctoriness of the formulae. This allowed a freedom that a rigidly realist mode might prevent or inhibit; there were creative advantages in using these forms. And we can see the lived experience informing the formulae. The formulaic adventures become acts of theatre, different sorts of conjured illusion: now I will show you an opium dream, now I will show you a mesmeric trance, now I will show you a hashish trance. They are all reveries, unrealities using the unrealities of formulae to explore real issues of life situations

and experiences. The debased clichés of commercial fiction, commodity production, are reinvested with specific signification. As with dreams, the reading involves a series of metamorphoses, resituating. The every day problem or situation is represented in a defamiliarized way. And the unrealities of dream or trance transitions, the arbitrariness for metaphoric purposes other than the naturalistic, are brought in to redefine the unreal and arbitrary transitions of the formulae of commercial fiction.

The perfunctory transitions of ‘The Curious Experience of Anthony Venn’ are later revealed to be transitions occurring in a dream or trance. So the ‘story’, it turns out, is in the other reality of dream experiences, a heightened rhetoric, a dream ordering of incidents in the (also fictionally postulated) ordinary reality to which Venn awakes. The heavily symbolic action of the flood and the boat and the girl, bringing in all the over-allegoric and over-symbolic resonances of Victorian fiction — the flood in George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), the River Thames of Charles Dickens’ *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65) — is revealed as the excess of dream, not clumsy formulae fiction. We reframe the story with the concluding revelation that the narrative has been a mesmeric trance; it now requires re-reading, the incidents now demand interpretation, the interpretation of dreams. We have turned from outer to inner landscapes.

The inner landscapes were always there for Clarke. This was not a development over time from external to internal. Their *locus classicus* is that early experiment, ‘Cannabis Indica’ (‘A Haschich Trance’) in the *Colonial Monthly*, February 1868, and they were reasserted in ‘Holiday Peak’ (*Australasian*, January 1873) which he privileged as the title story of his first collection of stories in the same year. The assumed model for English drug writing is Thomas de Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1822), and Clarke cites it in ‘Cannabis Indica’. But Clarke draws little directly from de Quincey. Possibly the biographical parallels of the father’s death and the expected inheritance’s dissolving allowed some measure of identification. And de Quincey’s involvement with the young prostitute Ann has possible echoes in ‘La Béguine’, and in Jenny in ‘Holiday Peak’. Clarke recalls of Jenny:



Her face brought back to me a strange dream of boy-and-girl folly, of a merry, thoughtless flight by train and boat, made dishes, French wines, babble, kisses, tears, and no pocket-money. (112; *AE* 312)

De Quincey's 1819 opium dream of Ann has its analogies with 'Holiday Peak':

And not a bow-shot from me, upon a stone, and shaded by Judean palms, there sat a woman: and I looked: and it was — Ann! ... and now I gazed upon her with some awe, but suddenly her countenance grew dim, and, turning to the mountains I perceived vapours rolling between us; in a moment all had vanished; thick darkness came on; and, in the twinkling of an eye, I was far away from mountains, and by lamp-light in Oxford-street, walking again with Ann — just as we walked seventeen years before, when we were both children.<sup>347</sup>

Opium was readily available. Charles Bright recalled Clarke drinking absinthe in the Café de Paris in Melbourne and remarking 'They say it'll drive a fellow mad in a month and I want to find out if that's a fact. I've tried opium-smoking and rather like that.'<sup>348</sup> Opium features in Clarke's 'Lower Bohemia' articles about Melbourne's Chinese community.<sup>349</sup> But in the one piece in which he is explicit about its drug origins, 'Cannabis Indica', the drug is cannabis, specifically hashish in tablet form, taken in sufficient amount to produce psychedelic, hallucinatory effects.

And hashish had its own specific literary traditions. The poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge sampled it, receiving a supply from Sir Joseph Banks. Banks himself had received the substance from Joseph Matra, a Corsican born in New York who became British consul in Tangiers after visiting Australia in the early days. Their names, if not their activities, are commemorated in Australia in Matraville, Bankstown

and the ubiquitous banksia. Louisa May Alcott, author of *Little Women*, published a charming story in 1876 about taking hashish pills on a picnic, 'Perilous Play'. But the great promoter of hashish was the French doctor Jacques-Joseph Moreau (1804–84), a psychiatrist at the hospital of Bicêtre in Paris, whose *Autobiographie* Clarke cites.<sup>350</sup> It was Moreau who introduced hashish to the Parisian literary community, giving it in the form of dawamesc, an Algerian sweetmeat, to Théophile Gautier, and including Gautier's account of using the drug in his study *Du Haschisch et l'alienation mentale* (1845).<sup>351</sup> From this encounter developed the famous 'Club des Haschischins' at the Hotel Pimodan on the Isle of St Louis. Amongst those who came to sample the drug, some only once, some often, were Gautier, Gérard de Nerval, Baudelaire, Balzac, Alexandre Dumas the elder and Victor Hugo.<sup>352</sup> The accounts by Gautier and Baudelaire of their hallucinations and reveries find few echoes in 'Cannabis Indica',<sup>353</sup> they had been concerned to describe the experience of hashish, and Clarke had no wish to repeat what had been adequately done. He was doing something that as far as was known had not been done before: writing a story while under the influence of hashish. In his prefatory notes he follows Gautier's account of the Club des Haschischins in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, February, 1846, describing the external setting in some detail. Clarke explains:

I have spoken of the effect that external objects have upon the faculties of the dreamer, and it is beyond question that many of the incidents related in the narrative which follows were unconsciously suggested by the pictures, books, and ornaments in the chamber. (212; *AE* 412)

There is a parallel with Moreau's experience in the way Clarke's 'man naked and bronzed' (220; *AE* 420) metamorphoses into 'a beautiful woman' with 'golden hair' (221; *AE* 421) and yet again into 'a lean, withered old woman'. (222; *AE* 422)

Sometimes the face of a friend is multiplied, or an object of no striking character is converted into a beautiful figure or is metamorphosed in a thousand different forms: thus an old servant of seventy-one years of age, in spite of wrinkles and gray hair, appeared before Dr Moreau in the form of a lovely girl adorned with a thousand graces.<sup>354</sup>

And there is a parallel with Gérard de Nerval's *Voyage en Orient* (1847) with its 'Histoire du Calife Hakem': 'Each of the main characters in the story lives a multiple reality caused in part by his use of hashish'.<sup>355</sup> The sense of a dual existence, captured in fiction by de Nerval, was recognized as a characteristic of the hashish experience. Comparing the effects of hashish and opium, the Scots traveller David Urquhart wrote in 1850 'opium does not give the double identity'.<sup>356</sup> This 'phenomenon of dual existence' is a recurrent theme of the American Fitz Hugh Ludlow's *The Hasheesh Eater* (1857): 'One part of me awoke, while the other continued in perfect hallucination'.<sup>357</sup> Clarke refers to the experience in 'Cannabis Indica':

I remember that my voice sounded like that of another person, and that I listened to my own story with interest, as if I did not know what would come next. I seemed to be two persons in one. My ordinary self was listening to some new-found self, of which I had been hitherto ignorant. (214n; *AE* 414n)

There is a classic out-of-body experience described in 'Pretty Dick':

Pretty Dick was up in the pure cool sky, looking down upon a little figure that lay on an open space among the heather. Presently, slowly at first, and then more quickly, he found out that this little figure was himself. (20; *AE* 220)

The child is still alive at this point, and returns to his body of pain. Fitz Hugh Ludlow's description of the experience under hashish is closely parallel: 'From the air in which I hovered I looked down upon my former receptacle'. (74) Possibly Mackinnon's retitling 'The Doppelganger' as 'The Dual Existence' is a key to the subtext of that story of crime and detection, a coded borrowing of Ludlow's phrase for the initiate to recognize. Clarke's use of the word 'assassin' in it (194, 197; *AE* 394, 397) encourages this speculation. 'Assassin' had been in European literary usage for many years; we find it used by the troubadours, by Dante and by Sir Thomas Browne. In a paper to the Institute of France in 1809 Sylvestre de Sacy explored the etymology of 'assassin' and derived it from hashish.<sup>358</sup> 'The Doppelganger' was published in the *Australian Monthly Magazine*, July–August 1866, 'Cannabis Indica' in the *Colonial Monthly*, February 1868, and 'Pretty Dick' in the *Colonial Monthly*, April 1869. Mackinnon, Clarke's literary executor, had been a fellow member of the Yorick Club with Clarke in 1868: it has been speculated that the members drank laudanum from the skull passed round, and Clarke's denial that they smoked 'green tea' introduces in its very denial the idea of some cannabis usage.<sup>359</sup>

Landscapes were particularly accessible for Ludlow with hashish.

The whole East, from Greece to farthest China, lay within the compass of a township; no outlay was necessary for the journey. For the humble sum of six cents I might purchase an excursion ticket over all the earth; ships and dromedaries, tents and hospices were all contained in a box of Tilden's extract. Hasheesh I called the 'drug of travel', and I had only to direct my thoughts strongly toward a particular part of the world previously to swallowing my bolus to make my whole fantasia in the strongest possible degree topographical. (64)

Landscapes generated by the mind and hashish. Ludlow's account

of the first experience of 'those sufferings which are generated by a dose of hasheesh taken to prolong the effects of a preceding one' has its similarities with the vision of 'Holiday Peak'. He writes:

Up mystic pathways, on a mountain of evergreens, the priests of some nameless religion flocked, mitre crowned, and passed into the temple of the sun over the threshold of the horizon. (132)

But after a further five grains on top of the initial fifteen the experience became anguished.

Over many a mountain range, over plains and rivers, I heard wafted the cry of my household, who wept for me with a distinct lamentation as if they were close at hand. Above all the rest, a sister mourned bitterly for a brother who was about to descend into hell!

Far in the distance rolled the serpentine fires of an infinite furnace ... (137)

These fires, mountain visions, and priests — or one priest — surge through 'Holiday Peak'. Clarke writes:

Again the skin drums resounded, again floated up to the full moon the wild chant of the women, again the furious fires blazed high, again the people in the valley of the peaks shouted to their savage divinity, again the painted and naked priest reared high the thirsty knife and flung himself — blood-red in the fire-glow — upon the panting victim. (104; *AE* 304)

And the astounding transitions from setting to setting, landscape to landscape, have all the characteristics of drug induced reverie, hashish

trance, opium dream, psychedelic trip.

There are clues enough in 'Holiday Peak' that this landscape is a drug induced landscape of the mind. Ah Yung is there with his opium pipe (107; *AE* 307) and the introduction of characters from Alexandre Dumas's *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844) has its significance for the initiate. Chapters 31 and 32 of Dumas' novel contain one of the classic Western accounts of the hashish experience. 'Monte Cristo in the South' is the title of chapter two of Clarke's 'The Gypsies of the Sea', the chapter in which we are told 'It was a dream from The Thousand and One Tales. It was the vision of an opium eater'. (148; *AE* 348) There are further references to opium and the *Tales of the Thousand and One Nights* in 'The Gypsies of the Sea' (147, 152; *AE* 347, 352), and 'In a Bark Hut' ('Learning "Colonial Experience"'):

I boiled down my recollections for M'Alister, and constituted myself a sort of Scherezade for his peculiar benefit. He would smoke, and I would fix my eyes on a long strip of bark which hung serpentwise from the ridge pole, and relate. (9; *AE* 209)

*The Tales of the Thousand and One Nights* are of course redolent of hashish, opium and other narcotics — notably 'The Tale of Hashish' (Night 1412), 'The Tale of Two Hashish Eaters' (Night 797–8) and 'The Tale of the Second Captain of Police' (Night 939–40).<sup>360</sup> Not that the experience of drugs is the only reason for reading or referring to the tales, or for referring to Dumas or de Quincey. And yet, in this established context of opium and hashish illusion, it is hard not to speculate about further drug reference when Clarke cites 'the dominant note of Edgar Allan Poe's poetry — Weird Melancholy' as 'the dominant note of Australian Scenery' (3; *AE* 203) in his classic landscape passage. As Alethea Hayter remarks, 'Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales* are steeped in de Quincey's influence', and Baudelaire saw hashish imagery in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'.<sup>361</sup> Poe's 'Loss of Breath' refers to hashish in its

original version. Poe's detective stories are an undoubted influence on 'The Doppelganger', that account of 'the dual existence' which we have speculated might allude to a hashish experience. The extraordinary and exotic landscapes of 'Holiday Peak' and 'The Gypsies of the Sea', no less than those of 'Cannabis Indica', may owe their origin in part to Clarke's well-attested experiments with hashish. Our conceptual distinctions between inner and outer landscapes begin to dissolve. Is Clarke's classic description of the Australian landscape that has been reprinted time and time again in his preface to Adam Lindsay Gordon's poems yet another drug induced perception, and the 'weird melancholy' something perceived, if not indeed produced, with the aid of hashish? As Clarke's alter ego Marston remarks in his 'Noah's Ark' column in *The Australasian*, 7 December 1872, 'I sometimes experiment upon myself, and after one has eaten hashish a depression of spirit follows'.<sup>362</sup> Weird melancholy indeed.

# Notes

## Marcus Clarke Bohemian

- 1 Cyril Hopkins' *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009, 44.
- 2 'Biography', *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Cameron Laing, Melbourne, 1884, 13; 'The Author's Biography', *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1890, iv.
- 3 Arthur Patchett Martin, 'An Australian Novelist', *Temple Bar*, 71, 1884, 96–110. Clarke's views may have resembled George's, though the 1860s are too early for a direct influence. Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* was published in the USA in 1879 and he visited Australia in 1890. Australian advocates of his work included John Farrell, William Lane and Catherine Spence: see Paul Stenhouse, *John Farrell, Poet, Journalist and Social Reformer 1851–1904*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2018; and William Lane, *The Workingman's Paradise*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1980, introduction by Michael Wilding, 26–9.
- 4 Charles Bright, 'Marcus Clarke', *Cosmos Magazine*, 30 April 1895, 418–22.
- 5 'The Cup, Told by the Camera', *Herald* (Melbourne), second edition, 6 November 1873, reprinted 7 November; reprinted *A Colonial City: High and Low Life. Selected Journalism of Marcus Clarke*, ed. L.T. Hergenhan, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1972, 184–91.
- 6 *The Argus* reported the case, 21–26 August 1874.
- 7 'The Café Lutetia', 'The Wicked World', *Weekly Times*, 28 February 1874, 9, reprinted in L.T. Hergenhan, ed., *A Colonial City*, 337, 338, and in *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Michael Wilding, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 667, 668. See further: L.E. Fredman, 'Melbourne Bohemia in the Nineteenth Century', *Southerly*, 18, 1, 1957, 83–91; Andrew McCann, *Marcus Clarke's Bohemia: Literature and Modernity in Colonial Melbourne*, Melbourne University Publishing, Melbourne, 2004; Michael Wilding, *Wild Bleak Bohemia: Marcus Clarke, Adam Lindsay Gordon, and Henry Kendall: a Documentary*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2014.



- 8 Charles Bright, 'Marcus Clarke', *Cosmos Magazine*, 30 April 1895, 418–19.
- 9 Reprinted in Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 541–5.
- 10 See *The Australasian*, 12 July 1873, in Hergenhahn, *A Colonial City*, 275–81.
- 11 For accounts of the Yorick see *The Yorick Club: Its Origin and Development, May 1868, to December 1910*, Atlas, Melbourne, 1911; Joseph Johnson, *Laughter and the Love of Friends: A Centenary History of the Melbourne Savage Club 1894–1994 and a History of the Yorick Club 1868–1966*, Melbourne Savage Club, Melbourne, 1994; 'The Later Clubs' in Paul de Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees: The Upper Class in Victoria 1850–80*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 1991; and Paul de Serville, *Athenæum Club, Melbourne: a New History of the early years 1868–1918*, Athenæum Club, Melbourne, 2013.
- 12 Geoffrey Hutton, *Adam Lindsay Gordon: the Man and the Myth*, Faber and Faber, London, 1978; Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996, 148.
- 13 'A Quiet Club', *Australasian*, 9 May 1868, 593; reprinted in *The Peripatetic Philosopher* by 'Q', George Robertson, Melbourne, 1869, 48.
- 14 Henry Kendall, 'A Colonial Literary Club, by a Wandering Bohemian', *Town and Country Journal*, 4 February 1871, 18, reprinted in *Henry Kendall: Poetry, Prose and Selected Correspondence*, ed. Michael Ackland, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1993, 161.
- 15 Hugh McCrae, *My Father and My Father's Friends*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1935, reprinted in Hugh McCrae, *Story Book Only*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1948.
- 16 *Australasian*, 9 May 1868, 593; reprinted in *The Peripatetic Philosopher*, 48.
- 17 Hamilton Mackinnon, *Austral Edition*, vi, slightly revised from the *Memorial Volume*.
- 18 'Cannabis Indica – a Psychological Experiment', *Colonial Monthly*, 1, 6, February 1868, 454–68; reprinted *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Wilding, 545 and as 'A Haschich Trance', *Austral Edition*, 413, and Marcus Clarke, *Stories*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983, 213.
- 19 Brian Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, 105.
- 20 Frank Maldon Robb, ed., *The Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon*, Oxford University Press, London, 1912, xxi–xxii.
- 21 Clarke added these three plays of his to the ongoing bibliography, 'The Australian Drama', in a note to the English antiquarian journal, *Notes and Queries*, 5 ser., 3, 20 February 1875, 158.
- 22 See Katherine Brisbane, ed., *Entertaining Australia*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1991; Eric Irvin, *Dictionary of the Australian Theatre 1788–1914*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985, and 'Marcus Clarke and the Theatre', *Australian Literary Studies*, 7, 1975, 3–14; Veronica Kelly, 'Colonial "Australian" Theatre Writers: Cultural Authorship and the Case of Marcus Clarke's "First" Play', *Australian Literary Studies*, 18, 1997, 31–44.

- 23 See David McVilly, 'Personalities from the Past: Marcus Clarke, Librarian', *Australian Library Journal*, March 1975, 70–1; E. Morris Miller, 'Some Public Library Memories', ed. Derek Drinkwater, *La Trobe Library Journal*, 9, 35, 1985; John Arnold, 'Marcus Clarke Joins the Public Library, Museum and National Gallery of Victoria', *Margin*, 40, 1996, 19–21; Sandra Burt, 'Marcus Clarke at the Public Library', *La Trobe Library Journal*, 67, 2001, 55–60.
- 24 Mackinnon, *Memorial Volume*, 43; slightly revised in *Austral Edition*, xi. The relationship between Clarke and Barry is the subject of a play by Sue Gore and Bill Garner, *The Future Australian Race: Redmond Barry versus Marcus Clarke*, (2008), text in Fryer Library, University of Queensland, item H2554.
- 25 Ian F. McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, Library Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1982, items 3003, 2128.
- 26 Hugh McCrae, *My Father and My Father's Friends*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1935, 47.
- 27 Facsimile in McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, 340–60.
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- 30 Hamilton Mackinnon, *Austral Edition*, xi.
- 31 *Argus*, *Age*, 17 January 1880. See Veronica Kelly, *Annotated Checklist of Comments on the Performance and Banning of Marcus Clarke's The Happy Land in Melbourne and Sydney*, Monash Bibliographical Series, Monash University, 1985.
- 32 *Austral Edition*, xvii–xviii.

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- 33 Cyril Hopkins, *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009, 6–7. Cyril's biography was begun around the year 1906 and revised in 1924.
- 34 Peripatetic Philosopher column, *Australasian*, 24 July 1869, 113; quoted in Brian Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, 255.
- 35 Claude Colleer Abbott, ed., *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, 2nd edition 1970, 2–3.
- 36 *Ibid*, 3–4.
- 37 *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1884, 15–16; slightly revised in *The Austral Edition*

of the *Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1890, i–ii.

- 38 In the *Australian Monthly Magazine*: 'Austin Friars', May 1866, 199–209; 'On a Pair of Boots', November 1866, 196–202; 'A Very Tough Subject', July 1867, 321–31.
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- 42 Norman White, *op. cit.*
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- 47 Norman White, *Hopkins: A Literary Biography*, 30.
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- 50 *The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, ed. C.C. Abbott, Oxford University Press, London, 1970, 12.
- 51 'Speech Days and School Days', *Australasian*, 28 December 1867, 817; reprinted in *The Peripatetic Philosopher by 'Q'*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1869, 86.
- 52 *Austral Edition*, 8–10; *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Michael Wilding, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 600–2; *Marcus Clarke, Stories*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983, 108–10.
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- 58 *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009, 131.
- 59 *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, 132.
- 60 Brian Elliott, 'The Friend of Charley Walker', *Australian Letters*, 3, 3, March 1961, 32–8.
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- 63 De Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, 46, 54, 56.
- 64 *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, 145.
- 65 Henry Gyles Turner, 'Gallery of Eminent Australasians. No XI. Marcus Clarke, Australasian Author and Journalist', *Once a Month*, 3, 4, October 1885, 241–6.
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- 72 De Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, 60.
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- 74 H.G. Turner, 'Marcus Clarke', *Melbourne Review*, 7, 25, January 1882, 1–15.
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- 79 Harold Love, *The Golden Age of Australian Opera: W.S. Lyster and his Companies 1861–1880*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1981. De Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, 137–8.

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- 81 'No 1. Melbourne Streets at Midnight', *Argus*, 28 February 1868, 6; Hergenhahn, *A Colonial City*, 101.
- 82 'No 3. The Chinese Quarter', *Argus*, 9 March 1868, 5–6; Hergenhahn, *A Colonial City*, 115.
- 83 Ken Oldis, *The Chinawoman*, Arcadia, Melbourne, 2008, 58, 208.
- 84 *Argus*, 9 March 1868, 5–6; Hergenhahn, *A Colonial City*, 116, 122, 124.
- 85 H.M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, Macmillan, London, 1911, 89–90, quoted in Cyril Hopkins' *Marcus Clarke*, 174.
- 86 *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1884, 41.
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- 98 De Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, 53.
- 99 Eileen Kaye, *Adam Lindsay Gordon: A Biography, Australasian*, 12 August – 2 December 1933.
- 100 *Austral Edition*, xi.

101 *Austral Edition*, xi.

102 De Serville, *Pounds and Pedigrees*, 76.

### What Do Poets Drink? Gordon, Clarke and Kendall at the Yorick

- 103 Claude Colleer Abbott, ed., *Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins including his Correspondence with Coventry Patmore*, Oxford University Press, London, 1956, 2nd edition 1970, 14; 'In a Lady's Album', in H.G. Turner, 'Marcus Clarke', *Melbourne Review*, 7, 25, January 1882, 10, reprinted in *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Michael Wilding, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 473; *Goody Two Shoes, and Little Boy Blue; or, Sing a Song of Sixpence! Harlequin Heydiddle-diddle-ëm, and the Kingdom of Coins! Fairy Extravaganza opening to Pantomime, Dialogue, and Songs written by Marcus Clarke*, Robert Bell, Melbourne, 1870; *Victoria's Farewell to Lady Bowen 19th February 1879*, M'Carron Bird & Co, Melbourne, 1879.
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- 106 Ross Fitzgerald, 'Another's Trouble' in *All About Anthrax*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1987, 153, 155, 159.
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- 169 Wannan, 38; Wilding ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 621, 622.
- 170 Wannan, 39–40, 42; Wilding ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 622, 624–5.
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- 188 Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *Memorial Volume*, 30–1; *Austral Edition*, vii.
- 189 Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *Austral Edition*, viii, slightly revised from *Memorial Volume*, 31–2.
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- 191 The relationship is well documented in Ken Stewart's essay "A Careworn

- Writer for the Press", Henry Kendall in Melbourne' in *Henry Kendall: The Muse of Australia*, ed. Russell McDougall, Centre for Australian Language & Literature Studies, University of New England, Armidale, 1992, 165–205, reprinted in Ken Stewart, *Investigations in Australian Literature*, Sydney Studies in Society & Culture, Sydney, 2000, 47–88.
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- 195 Ronald G. Campbell, *The First Ninety Years: The Printing House of Massina, Melbourne, 1859 to 1949*, A.H. Massina & Co., Melbourne, 1949.
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- 197 Brian Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, 257.
- 198 *The Well-Selected Library of Mr Marcus Clarke*, May & Company, Melbourne, 1874, facsimile in Ian F. McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, 342–60.
- 199 Leonie Kramer in 'The Literary Reputation of Adam Lindsay Gordon', *Australian Literary Studies*, 1,1, June 1963, 43–9, discusses the Preface and its significance in Australian literary criticism. She writes of Oscar Wilde's article 'Adam Lindsay Gordon' in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1889, reprinted in Wilde's *Reviews* (1908): 'clearly of more interest to Wilde than Gordon's poetry is Marcus Clarke's description of the Australian landscape'. John Barnes, who includes the Preface in his *The Writer in Australia: A Collection of Literary Documents 1856–1964*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne and London, 1969, remarks: 'Clarke's version of the Australian landscape was really a projection of his own inner state, a personal condition, which did not depend upon the visible external landscape and his relationship with it.' Not all commentators appreciated the Preface; negative reactions can be found in A.L. Chapman, 'Adam Lindsay Gordon', *Sydney Quarterly Magazine*, LX, 2 (1892); Alexander Sutherland, 'Adam Lindsay Gordon: A Memoir', *Melbourne Review*, October 1883; Arthur W. Jose, *History of Australasia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1899, 6th edition 1917, 249.
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- 203 'Marcus Clarke's Minor Writings', *Bulletin*, 29 April 1899; the comments are repeated in 'Marcus Clarke', *Bookfellow*, 15 January 1920. Both pieces are reprinted in Leon Cantrell, ed., *A.G. Stephens: Selected Writings*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1977, 174, 188.
- 204 'Marcus Clarke', *Melbourne Review*, 7, 25, January 1882, 2; 'Marcus Clarke, Australasian Author and Journalist', *Once a Month*, 3, 4, October 1885, 243; *The Development of Australian Literature*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1898, 302, 322.
- 205 Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1884, 41; slightly revised in Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1890, x.
- 206 Cyril Hopkins, *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009, 166, 250.
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- 211 Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, 123.
- 212 Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *Memorial Volume*, 37; *Austral Edition*, ix.
- 213 'A Master Printer. Fifty Years in Business. Mr A.H. Massina', *Herald* (Melbourne), 2 March 1909, 6.
- 214 David Dunstan, ed., Owen Suffolk, *Days of Crime and Years of Suffering*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2000, xxxiv, xlii–xliii.
- 215 Both series are reprinted in L.T. Hergenhan, ed., *A Colonial City: High and Low Life. Selected Journalism of Marcus Clarke*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1972, 100–25, 132–73.
- 216 *Argus*, 21 August 1869; reprinted in Hergenhan, *A Colonial City*, 171.
- 217 Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, 144.

- 218 Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, 114.
- 219 Cyril Hopkins' *Marcus Clarke*, 172.
- 220 All three articles reprinted in Michael Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 511–37. Only the second and third articles were reprinted in the *Austral Edition*, 190–200, in *Stories of Australia in the Early Days*, Hutchinson, London, 1897, and in Bill Wannan, *A Marcus Clarke Reader*, Lansdowne, Melbourne, 1963.
- 221 'Port Arthur No. 2', in Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 517.
- 222 'Port Arthur No. 3', in Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 524.
- 223 'Port Arthur No. 3', in Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 530.
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- 226 They are listed in the introduction to Poole ed., *Old Tales*, 17–22, and in Ian McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, Library Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1982, item 3401. McLaren also lists some thirty books drawn on for *His Natural Life*, item 3380.
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- 229 Poole, ed., *Old Tales*, 16–7.
- 230 Poole ed., *Old Tales* 21–2.
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- 246 Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres*, T. Fisher Unwin, London, 1898, vol 2, 312–4.
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- 248 L.T. Hergenhan, 'The English Publication of Australian Novels in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of *His Natural Life*', in Leon Cantrell, ed., *Bards, Bohemians and Bookmen: Essays in Australian Literature*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 56–71; P.D. Edwards, 'The English Publication of *His Natural Life*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 10, 1982, 520–6; Ian F. McLaren, 'Richard Bentley and the Publication of *His Natural Life*', *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 4, 1, 1982, 3–21, reprinted in McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, Library Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1982, 12–22.
- 249 All quotations from *His Natural Life* are from the text in *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Michael Wilding, University of Queensland Press, 1976.
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- 251 A.G. Stephens, 'Marcus Clarke's Minor Writings', *Bulletin*, 29 April 1899, red page; reworked as 'Australian Writers. II. Marcus Clarke', *Bookfellow*, 15 January 1920, 41–3.
- 252 Rosebery's letter is reproduced in the *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1884, 9, and *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1890, xxi–xxii. C.T. Clarke, who worked for the publisher George Robertson, recalled in *All About Books*, 19 May 1930, 123; 15 July 1930, 187, that only when Lord Rosebery visited Australia in 1883–4 and praised the novel did the strong demand for the Australian edition set in.
- 253 *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, ed. Laurie Hergenhan, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009.
- 254 *The Well-Selected Library of Mr Marcus Clarke*, May & Company, Melbourne, 1874, facsimile in Ian F. McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, 342–60. See Ann-Mari Jordens, 'Marcus Clarke's Library', *Australian Literary Studies*, 7, 1976, 399–412.
- 255 See Werner P. Friederich, *Australia in Western Imaginative Prose Writings 1600–1960*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1967, chapters 1–3.
- 256 Compare Watkin Tench, *A Narrative of the Expedition to Botany Bay*, J. Debrett, London, 1789, 138. 'If only a receptacle for convicts be intended, this place [Sydney Cove] stands unequalled from the situation, extent, and nature of the country. When viewed in a commercial light, I fear its insignificance will appear very striking.'
- 257 In *Six Caroline Plays*, ed. A.S. Knowland, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, act I. scene iii, 271.
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- 259 See Michael Roe, *Kenealy and the Tichborne Cause*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1974; and the novel *Claim* by Mat Schulz, HarperCollins, Sydney, 1996.
- 260 Wilding ed., *Marcus Clarke*, iii.
- 261 See Brian Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, 142–4, 153–4, 161–2.
- 262 *Australian Journal*, June 1872, 1558.
- 263 Decie Denholm, 'The Sources of *His Natural Life*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 4, 1969, 174–8; H.J. Boehm, 'His Natural Life and its Sources', *Australian Literary Studies*, 5, 1971, 42–64; Ian Henderson, "'There are French Novels and There are French Novels': Charles Reade and the 'Other Sources' of Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*", *JASAL*, 1, 2002, 51–66.



- 264 G.A. Wilkes, *Australian Literature: a Conspectus*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1969, 20–1.
- 265 L.L. Robson, 'The Historical Basis of *For the Term of His Natural Life*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 1, 2, 1963, 104–21. Further horrors are explored in Damien Barlow, "Oh, You're Cutting My Bowels Out!": Sexual Unspeakability in Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*', *JASAL*, 6, 2007, 33–48.
- 266 See L.T. Hergenhan, 'The Redemptive Theme in *His Natural Life*', *Australian Literary Studies*, 2, 1, 1965, 32–49.
- 267 See for instance Cecil Hadgraft, *Australian Literature*, Heinemann, London, 1960, 47. Lest this reference should seem misleading, I would like here to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to Cecil Hadgraft for persuading me to read *His Natural Life* which he, along with my father, so rightly assured me was one of the great nineteenth-century novels.
- 268 Brian Elliott, 'Marcus Clarke', Commonwealth Literary Fund Lecture, 22 September 1952, Canberra, Canberra University College.

### *Chidiack Tichbourne*

- 269 The topicality of the Tichborne name might have attracted readers to the serial in the *Australian Journal* where it ran from September 1874 to April 1875 as *Chidiack Tichbourne or the Babington Conspiracy*. The novel was not issued as a book until 1893 when it was published by Eden, Remington and Co., London and Sydney, as *Chidiack Tichbourne or the Catholic Conspiracy*. All quotations are from the book.
- 270 *The Well-Selected Library of Mr Marcus Clarke*, May & Company, Melbourne, 1874, lot 84; facsimile in Ian F. McLaren, *Marcus Clarke: An Annotated Bibliography*, Library Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1986, 342–60.
- 271 Isaac D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*, ninth edition, London, 1834, volume 3, 251–2. All quotations from this edition.
- 272 Though some of the descriptions in the novel may seem a little gratuitous. As, for instance, when the five besieged conspirators finally blow up their stronghold with a keg of gunpowder Tichbourne throws at the soldiers entering: 'A column of fire and smoke shot up, and the three men standing alone in the darkness felt something warm fall upon them like rain. They opened their eyes and saw that the rain was blood' (255).
- 273 'In Outer Darkness', *Australasian*, 21 August 1869, 232; 'Charles Dickens', *Argus*, 18 July 1870, 7, both reprinted in L.T. Hergenhan ed., *A Colonial City: High and Low Life. Selected Journalism of Marcus Clarke*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1972, 168, 228, and in Michael Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 629, 661.
- 274 For further on Walsingham and the Babington conspiracy, see Alan Haynes, *Walsingham: Elizabethan Spymaster and Statesman*, Sutton Publishing, Stroud,



- 2004; Robert Hutchinson, *Elizabeth's Spy Master: Francis Walsingham and the Secret War that Saved England*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 2006; and John Cooper, *The Queen's Agent: Francis Walsingham at the Court of Elizabeth I*, Faber and Faber, London, 2011.
- 275 The preceding item to 'Chidiok Titchbourne' in the ninth and successive editions of D'Israeli's *Curiosities* was 'Usurers of the Seventeenth Century' – an item that perhaps initially attracted Clarke's attention.
- 276 Cyril Hopkins' *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Laurie Hergenhahn, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009, 255.
- 277 'Holiday Peak', *Australasian*, 18 January 1873, 72, 25 January, 104, reprinted *Holiday Peak and Other Tales*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1873, 1–17. Reprinted in Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, Melbourne, 1890, 308; *Marcus Clarke*, ed. Wilding, 600; and *Stories* by Marcus Clarke, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983, 108.
- 278 *Bulletin*, 19 November 1903, red page.
- 279 J.R. Maze, *Thorunka*, November 1970, 19, reprinted in *Australian Literary Studies*, 6, 4, 1974, 392.
- 280 Brian Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, 165.

## The Stories

- 281 *Holiday Peak and Other Tales*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1873; *Four Stories High*, A.H. Massina, Melbourne, 1877; *The Mystery of Major Molineux and Human Repetends*, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1881.
- 282 *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1884; *Sensational Tales*, Australian Shilling Series, M'Carron, Bird & Co, Melbourne, 1886; *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, ed. Hamilton Mackinnon, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1890.
- 283 *Australian Tales*, A.W. Bruce, Melbourne, 1896; *Australian Tales of the Bush*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1897.
- 284 *The Future Australian Race*, F.F. Baillière, Melbourne, 1877.
- 285 Marcus Clarke, *Stories*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1983.
- 286 C. Hartley Grattan, *Australian Literature*, University of Washington Bookstore, Seattle, 1929, 8.
- 287 Cecil Hadgraft, ed., *The Australian Short Story Before Lawson*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986.
- 288 *Australasian*, 5 September 1868, partially reprinted in *The Peripatetic Philosopher* by 'Q', George Robertson, Melbourne, 1869, 42–3; reprinted L.T. Hergenhahn, ed., *A Colonial City: High and Low life – Selected Journalism of Marcus Clarke*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1972, 32–3.

- 289 *Australasian*, 26 February 1870, 273; reprinted in *Memorial Volume*, 188; *Austral Edition*, 324–8; *A Colonial City*, 67–72; and Marcus Clarke, *Stories*, 124–8.
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- 318 Julian Tenison Woods recalls a similar experience with Adam Lindsay Gordon: 'We were overtaken by a severe storm and lost our way. Night came on, and the rain poured down in torrents. As my sight at night was nearly as defective as Gordon's we gave up looking for the track, and sat crouched under a tree waiting for the rising of the moon. We were both miserably cold and hungry, and it was most ludicrous to hear my companion reciting long passages from various authors on the subject of storms. We could not light a

fire, and I only had to shiver while he gave me the tempest scene in *King Lear*, which he knew by heart. He was much amused when I asked him whether he would like a nice drink of cold spring water after his exertions. We got to a station about midnight and had to share the same room; but Gordon would not go to bed. The warm tea we had had at supper had revived him, and he kept walking up and down the supper room reciting *Childe Harold* till near morning.' ('Personal Reminiscence of Adam Lindsay Gordon', *Melbourne Review*, 9, 1884, 131–41).

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- 322 *Bulletin*, 13 August 1881, 1,
- 323 L.H. Allen, introduction to *For the Term of His Natural Life*, World's Classics, Oxford University Press, London, 1952, ix–x. Arsène Dupin is Poe's detective.
- 324 'The Curious Experience of Anthony Venn', *Australasian*, 27 September 1873, 389, 18 October, 485, 1 November, 549.
- 325 Francis Adams, 'The Prose Work of Marcus Clarke', 115–35.
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- 331 Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1954.
- 332 Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, Faber and Faber, London, 1968.
- 333 Hergenhan, ed., *A Colonial City*, 269.

### 'Weird Melancholy':

#### Inner and Outer Landscapes in Marcus Clarke's Stories

- 334 Hamilton Mackinnon, ed., *The Austral Edition of the Selected Works of Marcus Clarke*, Fergusson and Mitchell, Melbourne, 1890. The stories were grouped in

- two parts, 'Australian Tales and Sketches' (203–340) and 'Stories – Imaginative and Fanciful' (344–433). These two parts are reprinted in facsimile, repaginated, as *Stories* by Marcus Clarke, Sydney, 1983. All quotations are from this edition. Mackinnon retitled many of Clarke's stories. I give Clarke's title first and Mackinnon's in parenthesis.
- 335 See L.T. Hergenhahn, 'Marcus Clarke and the Colonial Landscape', *Quadrant*, 13, 1969, 31–51.
- 336 *Australasian*, 12 July 1873, 43–4, reprinted in L.T. Hergenhahn, ed., *A Colonial City*, 275–81.
- 337 H.G. Turner, 'Marcus Clarke', *Melbourne Review*, 7, 25, January 1882, 1–15.
- 338 It was now edited by Charles Dickens junior, whose letter of acceptance to Mrs Cashel Hoey, January 1873, is preserved in the Mitchell Library, microfilm CY/ Reel 604, 254. Mrs Hoey had been looking after Clarke's literary interests in London, and Clarke proposed to dedicate to her a volume of his stories, which he asked Cyril Hopkins to try and place with a London publisher – without success; see *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, ed. L.T. Hergenhahn, Ken Stewart and Michael Wilding, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2009, 209–10.
- 339 'Popular Art and Gustave Doré', *Australasian*, 28 September 1867, 392; reprinted in Hamilton Mackinnon ed., *The Marcus Clarke Memorial Volume*, Cameron, Laing & Co, Melbourne, 1884, 261–72, and *Austral Edition*, 472–80.
- 340 *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, 217.
- 341 *Australasian*, 8 February 1873, 166; reprinted *Four Stories High*, A.H. Massina, Melbourne, 1877, 25–35; and Michael Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1976, 610–11. Marcus's cousin Andrew Clarke may be alluded to here. He was educated at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, and nicknamed 'spicy Andrew' according to Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851–1861*, Melbourne University Press, 1963, 141n.
- 342 See Mathew J. Brucolli, ed., *The Price Was High: The Last Uncollected Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, New York, 1979.
- 343 *Sensational Tales*, Australian Shilling Series, M'Carron, Bird & Co, Melbourne, 1886.
- 344 In 1858 Marcus's uncle James Langton Clarke was appointed Judge of the Courts of Mines and of the County Court at Ararat in the Wimmera, some 150 miles from Melbourne. Clarke visited him there and spent two years on the neighbouring Swinton and Ledcourt stations, 1865–7. The name of the town no doubt suggested the title of 'Noah's Ark' for Clarke's column. See Brian Elliott, *Marcus Clarke*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, 3, 48, 184.
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- 346 *Cyril Hopkins' Marcus Clarke*, 13.

- 347 Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, ed., Alethea Hayter, Harmondsworth, 1982, 112.
- 348 Charles Bright, 'Marcus Clarke', *Cosmos Magazine*, 30 April 1895, 418.
- 349 *Argus*, 9 March 1868, 5–6, reprinted in Hergenhahn, ed., *A Colonial City*, 119–22.
- 350 Wilding, ed., *Marcus Clarke*, 554, n.2. In the *Austral Edition* Mackinnon omitted the first two footnotes of the *Colonial Monthly* text of 'Cannabis Indica'.
- 351 Gautier's account appeared in *La Presse*, 19 July 1843.
- 352 Derek Stanford, Introduction to Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, *Hashish, Wine, Opium*, Calder and Boyars, London, 1972, 9; Andrew C. Kimmens, ed., *Tales of Hashish*, William Morrow, New York, 1977, 40–112; Ernest L. Abel, *Maribuana*, Springer, New York, 1980, 154.
- 353 It is not known whether Clarke read their accounts of hashish, or acquired his information from a secondary source; a likely secondary source is the article 'Confessions of a French Haschisch Eater' in the journal *Once a Week*, 1, 3rd series, 18 April 1868, 349–51. Charles Reade's novel *Foul Play*, which Clarke adapted for the stage in 1868, was being serialized in *Once a Week* and there was an episode of it in the issue containing the 'Haschisch Eater' article.
- 354 'The Hashish', *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, 256, 25 November 1848, 343.
- 355 Emmanuel J. Mickel, Jr, *The Artificial Paradises in French Literature*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1969, 115.
- 356 David Urquhart, *The Pillars of Hercules: A Narrative of Travels in Spain and Morocco*, Richard Bentley, London, 1850, vol. 2, 135.
- 357 Fitz Hugh Ludlow, *The Hasheesh Eater: Being Passages from the Life of a Pythagorean*, New York, 1857; facsimile, City Lights, San Francisco, 1979, 58. The concept of the dual existence recurs on pp. xxiii, 23, 106, 163–4.
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- 359 'A Quiet Club', *Australasian*, 9 May 1868, 593; reprinted in 'Q'. *The Peripatetic Philosopher*, Melbourne, 1869, 48–9.
- 360 *The Book of the Thousand and One Nights*, translated by E. Powys Mathers, 4 volumes, Casanova Society, London, 1923.
- 361 Introduction to de Quincey, *Confessions*, 21. See also Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*, Faber and Faber, London, 1968. Poe's 'Fall of the House of Usher' appeared in his *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840).
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